
Mushoku Tensei 18

Young Man Period - Asura

Kingdom Chapter

Rifujin na Magonote

Chapter 176 - Departure Towards Asura Kingdom

Part 1

There are eight members for the journey.

Ariel, Luke, Sylphy, Elmore, Kleene.

Ghyslaine, Eris, and I joined as part of the princess's escort

A huge two wheeled carriage, and five horses.

Unexpectedly the preparations for the voyage of Second Princess Ariel Anemoi Asura, who hailed from a country as great as the Kingdom of Asura, were rather simple.

Ostensibly, it was because we were returning incognito.

Hiding the truth that we are returning via teleportation from the public.

However, in spite of being incognito, many people were lined up at the entrance of the Magic City Sharia.

The principal of the Magic University, along with members of the student council.

General Manager of the Magic Guild.

Head of the magic tool atelier.

Among others, heads of various organizations, members of royalty from the Magic Triumvirate, and representatives of nobles, came to see Ariel off one after another.

I wonder if these guys don't know what incognito means.^[1]

Out of all its possible meanings, none of them included a big number of farewells, escorted in such a grandiose way.

... Well, even if this send-off causes a problem, it's the fruit of Ariel's labours.^[2]

Orsted is mighty, but his connection with the human race is almost nonexistent.

There may come a time when he will need these connections.

It was my duty to deal with them in his stead.

Part 2

Now, it's time for departure.

We will travel by teleportation, horseback, and carriage.

Take the horse carriage to the Sky Castle via magic teleportation circle, which teleports the entire group just north of the [Upper Jaw of the Red Dragon], at which point we will travel southward by land.

Perugius also set up a magic circle where the horse-drawn carriages can enter.

If Perugius can do that much, I wanted him to send Arumanfi to Asura Kingdom to draw the magic circle.

I tried to voice my suggestion, but Perugius said that out of the thirteen people including himself, only two are able to draw the teleportation magic circle.

They're Perugius and Sylvaril.

In addition, it looks like the teleportation circles can't be installed anywhere.

The teleportation magic circle in the Sky Castle is fueled by

Perugius's magic, but to activate the teleportation magic circle that acts as the receiver, a certain condition must be met.

As for the condition, it's magic. ^[3]

In the past, taking advantage of places that possessed a high magic density, the genius that created what came to be called teleportation magic produced a magic tool that semi-permanently activated the magic through absorbing magic from its surroundings.

In other words, teleportation circles cannot be made in places that did not possess a high magic density.

The fact that teleportation magic circles I used to travel to the Begaritto Continent were located deep in a forest and the desert, were due to such reasons. ^[4]

Of course, from later research, it became possible to keep the magic circle active by attaching magic crystals periodically.

In the case of using a magic crystal, it's called manual feed type magic.

Because 『The magic density is thin.』 in most of the area around Asura Kingdom, most magic circles are the manual feed type.

The magic crystal is installed during an emergency and is removed when not in use.

Only a select few accurately know where to place the magic crystal.

In our situation, both were destroyed. The type that didn't require a magic crystal along with type that did require a magic crystal. Everything had been blown apart.

The location, the equipment, and the magic circle.

If the three factors previously mentioned are not known, it is impossible to create a magic teleportation circle.

So how does Perugius intend to come to the Asura Royal Palace?

For now they told me: [You don't need to worry about that.]

Because of Ariel-sama, it looks like they intend to make a surprise appearance.

Part 3

"Amazing. It's amazing! Rudeus! Look! The town is so small!"

The moment when we transferred to the air fortress, Eris raised her voice.

After jumping off the horse to look down on the sky and up at the castle, she raised a voice of admiration.

It was an unexpectedly childish reaction from a twenty-year-old woman. We could not help but cast wry smiles.

Still, it's really heartwarming.

One person's mood somehow became better after seeing Eris's reaction.

It's Sylvaril who has been waiting before the magic circle.

Looking at Eris go crazy, she was feeling proud in her mind.

Enough to even be seen as such with the mask over her face.

"I hope you like the scenery from the Sky Castle, Chaos Breaker."

"It's the best! First time I've seen something like this!"

Seeing the carefree smile of Eris, Sylvaril's favor for Eris increased.

Honesty is the best policy.

"Is that so, then allow me to introduce myself. I'm the first familiar of Perugius-sama, Sylvaril of the Void. Pleased to make your acquaintance."

"Eris Greyrat!"

Eris seemed to be itching to go into the castle.

Was it just my imagination or did it look like Sylvaril was showing her around with a happy mood and she even explained this and that?

While watching that charming scene, we followed them.

While explaining this and that to Eris, Sylvaril guided us to the audience room.

We planned to greet Perugia before our departure.

"So you've come."

As always, Perugia was proudly sitting on a chair while surrounded by his familiars.

This time only a greeting was done.

And so when Ariel came forward, and started to make a formal statement... Eris swiftly stepped forward.

"Who are you?"

I was horrified.

In my mind floated the image of Eris clenching her fist and hitting Perugia. Even if it's Perugia, he will not be so forgiving if we tried to pick a fight with him.

When I quickly tried to stop her, Eris knelt down to her knee.

"Nice to meet you. My name is Eris Greyrat, and I've become Rudeus's wife a while back. Pleased to make your acquaintance."

I was taken aback.

Wait a minute, the person kneeling respectfully there is who again?

"Armored Dragon King Perugia Dola. Eris Greyrat. I know about you. Trained in the sword holy land and challenging Orsted, as befitting of your nickname [Mad Sword King]."

"I am still immature....."

"Oh."

Although Eris is trying to be humble, but she's speaking in monotone.

Possibly, she only memorized the words without knowing the meaning.

"Eris Greyrat. Your attitude is admirable, I like it."

Perugius looks happy.

"In this case, I too need to apologize for my subordinate's actions during the incident eight years ago."

Eris looks up and she made a quizzical look.

That face. It was the face of [I don't remember that].

"Do not worry about it."

"Is that so? I appreciate it."

Perugius laughed and shook his hand carelessly.

Eris stood up, she walked towards me with a fully self-satisfied expression.

It was a face that seemed to say: [I can do this much if I want to, you know.]

She might have been practicing this a lot.

In any case, Perugius seems to like Eris.

His attitude towards her is different from the one towards me.

As I thought, everyone would be fond of a honest person without a hidden side. Getting along with each other is a good thing.

"Everybody, please follow me."

After Ariel gave her greeting, Sylvaril guided us out of the audience room.

The teleportation magic circle was located in a place reached by looping around after going through the entrance.

The teleportation magic circle was emitting a faint light from the inner part of a currently empty large hall.

Sylvaril explained this and that regarding the hall, but I'll omit that.

We step on the magic circle.

Part 4

The teleportation circle's destination was a ruin.

The ruin used to house the teleportation circle on the other side.

The same type in Begaritto's mainland and near Ranoa kingdom.

According to Orsted, there were many more of these ruins in the past, a variety of races seemed to have been moving freely between the continents.

It became totally prohibited to prevent it being exploited in the event of war.

A certain dragon tribe hated this rule, thus they hid the ruins they were using on their own by putting barriers around the ruins.

All over the world, there will always be guys that stand against the world only for their convenience.

Since we can move comfortably thanks to that, I am not going to blame such desires.

The ruin was within a dense forest.

From the valley called [Red Dragon's Upper Jaw], it's a little northwest on the map according to the information received that was confirmed in advance.

However, that is where the problem was about to occur.

Although it's good that we can move the whole carriage using the magic teleportation circle, we can't move the carriage out of the ruins. We have this many people, yet we didn't think of that.....?

While I was still dumbfounded by that, Ariel's two servants began to disassemble the carriage carefully.

Two people disassembled the carriage in a fluid motion and carried the pieces outside the ruin.

And while I was thinking that they seemed to have assembled the carriage into small packages.

From there, loading the parts of the carriage on horses, we move to the vicinity of the highway.

There the reassembly of the carriage was finished in no time.

Since it was getting dark when we got out on the highway, we decided to camp the night there near the highway.

"Whew"

Surrounding the campfire, we prepared food.

There was no need to worry about kindling or food in this place with woods nearby.

I mean, it's been collected from the demons that attacked us in the forest.

Beast type monsters and firewood (Treants), also some wild grass.

Firewood (Treants), they really do exist everywhere.

There is even one living in my house, so maybe Treants are the next ruler of the world.

Normally I would just sit on the ground, but one of Ariel's group had brought a carpet.

Should I say as expected of the princess?

Sylphy and two servants were in charge of cooking.

I offered to help, but I was gently turned down.

Well, with Sylphy's skill even if I help I will just get in the way.

Just in case I told them that I can make tableware and cookware if there's not enough.

During the cooking I was feeling bored.

I thought about patrolling the surrounding area to alert the party for incoming danger, but Ghyslaine and Eris are already doing that.

It looks like my turn won't come.

In this journey, there is no work for me.

This is the first time it's been like this.

I've never experienced this, not even during the time when I was traveling alone and intruding on other parties.

In those days I, having a surplus of magic, was treasured as a person useful for various chores.

From the purification of water to the production of tableware.

Since there are several servants here who can use magic, the work that was usually mine seems to have disappeared.

Well, my job is not to look after Ariel.

Since I am fighting against Hitogami, I need to determine who his apostles are and defeat them.

Our current conjecture is Luke, Darius, and one more person.

The possibility of the North Emperor or Water God being an apostle is high.

I have heard ways to deal with them from Orsted.

I simulated in my mind what I was taught many times, but I should try it out in actual combat.

".....Anyway."

I look at Luke while muttering.

A splendid armored figure, he stood close to Ariel.

He's in a position to immediately protect Ariel at a critical moment.

.....if Luke is an Apostle of Hitogami.

And if I decided to not kill him.

I wonder what Orsted would do about Luke.

Luke's important to Ariel.

When Orsted requires Asura's assistance after Ariel becomes king, it would be bad if there was an apostle of Hitogami advising Ariel.

No, Asura Kingdom will be coming to Orsted's aid far into the future.

Which means that Luke will probably be dead by that time.

So it probably doesn't matter.

But, if Ariel died immediately there wouldn't be a meaning for her to become king.

No, the event 『Ariel becomes the king.』 would surely become a turning point.

Or the event 『The First Prince becomes king.』 might be our Bad End flag.

Yes..... Just in case, I'll ask Orsted about it at the next opportunity.

I don't know if he will tell me though.

Orsted does not tell me in detail about the events 100 years in the future.

I asked him about how Hitogami said [The world will be destroyed if I die], but he just replied [That possibility exists.]

It feels like he will be fine with whatever happens afterwards as long as he can kill Hitogami.

Well, even if the world is destroyed in the future, the me in the present can't afford to worry about it.

My goal for now is to protect my family as best as I can.

It would be irresponsible, but I can't be so hard headed.

The events of the future must be settled by the people of that generation.

But would my descendant lend their hand to Orsted even knowing the world will be destroyed beforehand?

Or maybe they will lend their hands without knowing about it.

If it is the latter, it's a little pitiful.

To prepare for that possibility, it would be better if I leave some words for them for the time being.

"Rudi, the meal is ready. Ghyslaine and Eris too, let's eat!"

My thoughts were interrupted after hearing those words.

Well, after I get back from the Asura kingdom, I should write about it in my diary.

I have a tendency to forget things.

Dinner was delicious.

As expected of Sylphy.

And the other two attendants are also amazing.

Even though we don't have a lot of food supplies in this situation, they could make it this delicious.

I should ask them to teach me the next occasion there is spare time.

Part 5

Night.

Ariel is the only one that is using the tent while the rest of us are on watch duty shifts.

We watch in sets of two.

That said, there's seven people excluding Ariel.

So there are three shifts.

At that time, one person patrols the surroundings.

Me, Sylphy, Eris, and Ghyslaine.

All of which have the ability to defeat a demon alone.

"I'm going to patrol the surroundings."

The first day is my turn.

As I say that to others, I begin to walk away from the bonfire.

Towards the deep forest ahead.

In total darkness, the only light source is the torch that I am holding.

However, I know that there are no monsters in this area.

But being cautious is never a bad thing.

"....."

Then after walking for about five minutes.

And quite a distance away from the campfire.

A guy abruptly appeared in the dark.

A flowing silver-haired man with golden Sanpaku eyes.

A man with a scary face akin to a devil, he appeared out of the darkness.

"Eek!"

I screamed involuntarily and was about to let the torch fall from my hand.

"Ha.....Excuse me. Thanks for your effort. Orsted-sama."

"Ah."

While I was greeting him, I sat on the nearby tree roots.

Orsted also sat down on the tree root on the opposite side.

Orsted is following us.

It seems that Perugius also knew about this.

Since the magic circle was used to follow us.

Thus we scheduled a period of contact during the journey.

Since it will be suspicious if we meet too often, we only meet once every few days and only during my turn to patrol around.

"What's the news?"

"Luke isn't making any suspicious moves. The journey is also going smoothly."

And, I finished my regular report.

Since it's the first day, there is not much to be said.

Orsted also didn't seem to expect anything and didn't pursue this matter any further.

"That's good. Maybe there won't be anything for a few days."

"Right."

"Just be extra careful after passing through the [Red Dragon's Upper Jaw]."

"Okay."

The Red Dragon's Upper Jaw.

It is a connected valley at the Red Dragon Mountains that separates the northern part of the central continent and the Asura kingdom.

An unforked valley, wide enough that big carriages can pass each other in the valley area.

By the way, I was nearly killed by Orsted in the Red Dragon's Lower Jaw.

After passing the valley, there is a large forest.

It's a famous forest in the Asura kingdom.

That forest is called the [Red Dragon's Beard.]

But, it is often lumped together with the valley to the north and called the [Red Dragon's Upper Jaw].

Also, although it was part of the Asura kingdom, to the south from the forest is the border of the Asura kingdom.

As if to surround the south side of the forest, there is a rampart like the Great Wall of China built there, with a few hundred soldiers stationed there.

It was to stop the monsters from entering the south and also to prepare for an invasion from the North.

There are all kinds of reasons.

And the most important point.

This deep forest is often used to deal with important people.

Once you enter the forest, it becomes a place where there will be no witnesses.

In some areas of the forest, there are powerful monsters, and there are bandits prowling along the northern and southern paths.

It's a great place to secretly assassinate someone.

If Darius had received advice from Hitogami, this is where he will send his assassins.

After all, sending soldiers to the northern part of the Upper Jaw of Red Dragon would be considered as invasion of another country.

If they attacked the Princess after passing the southern checkpoint within Asura Kingdom, it will surely become big news.

It will become bad press for Darius under these two circumstances.

Therefore, the first chance to kill the princess is here.

If it is here, they are able to kill Ariel with the least possible risk.

Orsted predicted so.

"So, it will be as planned."

"Yes."

If there is an attack, taking the highway will probably be risky.

Since the highway is dangerous I will suggest an alternative route.

And, at the same time we could go and scout for Tris and her band of thieves.

If there is no attack, Orsted will move at that time.

A self directed play.

For that end, we stashed away a bunch of summoning scrolls along

with magic crystals.

We will find out that the magic beasts in the area are being controlled by some individual.

That's the plan.

"If there is an attack, the possibility of the North Emperor Auber Corvette appearing is high. Be careful of that guy."

"Yes. Just as planned."

"Oh"

If Asura Kingdom has hired the North Emperor and the Water God.

Orsted saw that the possibility that the North Emperor is dispatched as an assassin is high.

The swordsman named Auber, it seems he is good at those kinds of jobs.

An unpredictable swordsman that symbolizes the North God Style.

From his hairstyle and clothes to his way of fighting, everything about him is unique.

A man gifted in surprise attack.

『Peacock Sword』 Auber Corvette.

Eris has already been informed beforehand about the possibility of fighting him and the Water God.

If I'm right, Eris had learned swordsmanship from Reida and Auber for some time.

Surely it will be difficult to fight against your former master.

Although I thought that, she only folded her arms and answered, [Yes! I can't wait.].

Those two people, I wonder if she didn't build any close relationships with those people like with Ghyslaine.

What I mean is, Eris, you don't have friends in the Holy Land of the Sword? I'm a little worried.

"I'm concerned."

"About what?"

"You."

"....."

"I have to say, for this upcoming battle, you're being too optimistic."

Optimistic.

I wonder if he's right.

Maybe so.

But, I am prepared.

I also heard about instructions for what to do.

Although there is a chance that Auber won't come, I still simulated several ways to deal with him.

Also, I know in my head that he is a terribly strong opponent.

All that's left is to just deal with it calmly.

While I can't say that it's a perfect plan, there's no reason to feel more nervous than necessary.....probably.

Rather, I should relax at this stage, it is more efficient.....probably.

"Just in case, take this."

Orsted took out several sheaves of papers from his bosom.

They were scrolls with complex magic circles drawn on them.

"It is a magic circle for the king class healing magic. You mentioned that you could only use healing magic up to advanced level. In case of emergency, use it."

"Yes"

The healing magic of the king class. To what extent could it heal?

Even for major injuries like missing limbs, such magic can regrow them perfectly.

My defensive and evasion ability, and the enemy's offensive ability.

Based on those factors, it would be best to have at least this level of recovery.

"So even king class healing magic has magic circles."

"Almost all magic in this world can be reproduced with magic circles."

"Almost.....then there is magic that cannot be reproduced?"

"As long as it's not a unique magic with a special invocation."

"Such as?"

"The howling magic that the beast tribe uses and the gravity magic used by the dragon king. Those things, without understanding the logic behind them, cannot be reproduced."

Howling Magic, what I've been calling Voice Magic?

Once, I surprised someone with it.

The level I can use it at is more or less able to scare people, but I don't know if it's because of the actual magic or not.

"Although I read that your future self has mastered gravity magic, it probably would have required considerable time to master it. Researching, understanding, and training."

"..... Orsted-sama, I've heard that you can use all the techniques in this world. Can you also use gravity magic? "

"That's right, although it's not a very user friendly technique."

Oh, so you could.

That's expected.

"But I assume you don't know from the moment you're born... You too have to learn them one at a time, right?"

"It is so."

I see.

At the moment, I can't even imagine the basic principle even if I heard it.

With time, maybe it'll naturally come to me, how anti-gravity and the like would work.

Well, rather than pursuing what I do not know or if I can learn it, it's better to do what I can do right now.

Such things could wait for when I had more space to breathe.

All right.

Now the next matter to discuss is Luke.

"Come to think of it, Orsted-sama. Assuming that Luke is an apostle of Hitogami, it's up to me whether or not I need to kill him, right? "

"That's right."

"In the event that I don't kill Luke and princess Ariel still becomes King, what will happen to him?"

"Nothing will happen. When that time comes, he will also escape from Hitogami's grasp."

"Is it safe to assume that only three apostles of Hitogami will appear? Can we leave him as it is?"

"It will not be a problem. Humans will remain as apostles of Hitogami only until the result of his future prediction comes."

Until the result of a future prediction?

Something this important should be said earlier!

What the hell, what if I thought the apostles could change in the middle of a fight?

"And a certain turning point acts as a boundary for Hitogami's future sight. In this case, the turning point is when Ariel does or doesn't remove Grabell and Darius and becomes queen."

"So until then, the apostles will not change?"

"That's right."

Muu, you keep such important things until later

Well, that's alright for now.

Let's say it is good just to know about this now.

Until this is over, the apostles will not change.

On the contrary, once it's over, the apostles will cease to be automatically.

Well, there is still the possibility of them becoming an Apostle again.

And judging from Orsted's tone,

If any apostles die before the prediction comes true, Hitogami cannot replace them.

That's the reason to kill them.

".....Now, return. If you don't hurry back soon, it will be suspicious."

"Okay."

With that, I finished the scheduled contact with Orsted.

I quickly returned to the campfire and reported that there was nothing of note surrounding the camp.

I finished my shift and covered myself with blankets.

In this way, the first day of the trip to the Asura kingdom passed.

Notes

1. The raws had a declarative sentence, changing it for consistency. - saihafire
2. Need TLC on this, I can't believe I'm picking this volume up when it's this bad...
3. If anyone asks, I'm correcting it to match the raw text's sentence structure. - saihafire
4. The usual. -saihafire

Chapter 177 - Red Dragon's Upper Jaw

Part 1

The Red Dragon's Upper Jaw.

It is a valley with just one continuous road.

It is not as straight as the Holy Sword Highway.

But, it's a single path without any forks.

It's between two different country's borders, a neutral area without an owner.

We passed by a big caravan while traveling there.

There were ten wagons and more than fifty horses carrying the cargo.

It's a big caravan carrying cargo from the Asura kingdom to the Magic Triumvirate.

The caravan is travelling in a single file escorted by adventurers.

These adventurers have been glaring at us with sharp eyes.

Seeing that, I suddenly remembered about my old days.

There was also a time when I was part of the escort of a caravan heading to the north.

It wasn't as big as the caravan we passed, but if I remember correctly it had many young merchants in it.

I think if they came to greet me, I wouldn't remember any of their names.

At that time, I was alone.

Solitude.

I was so lonely.

After all, at that time I was under the impression that I had been abandoned by Eris.

During that time I thought my life as a man was over.

During that time I thought nothing mattered anymore, and there is nothing to believe in this world.

In those days, strengthening my body and worshiping God were my only truths in this world.

Since then, I have done all kinds of things.

I got my confidence back through Sylphy, and now I'm a father of one.

I'm not one you would call 『Venerable』, but I am a father.

Clearing my misunderstanding with Eris, making her my wife.

Roxy also came along and married me, and now she is pregnant with my second child.

With those three wives, my night life has also become merrier.

If the me in the past saw my current situation, what would he say?

In my situation, if I wanted to rub some tits ... maybe one of them will let me?

".....Hey, why are you suddenly so quiet?"

I heard Eris's voice from my side.

I suddenly noticed, unaware that Eris and I were side-by-side.

By the way, since I cannot ride a horse, I'm stuck sitting behind Sylphy.

"Hey Eris."

"What?"

"Can I grope your tits?"

"What are you saying so suddenly..... of course not."

Was it no good?

Is asking so casually out of bounds?

..... Well.

The me in the past probably wouldn't have much to say.

He would just laugh coldly to himself and say congratulations.

The me in the past, was one of those guys.

I would keep my distance while congratulating them, acting like that happiness is unrelated to me.

"....."

"You know, Rudi."

A voice came from the front, it's Sylphy.

"Even though you asked to grope Eris, why didn't you ask me.....? "

Before I was aware of it, my hands were already massaging Sylphy's chest.

No wonder my hand started feeling good.

"Oh, my bad. I did that unconsciously."

"It's fine for now since there aren't really any monsters here, but hold it in until after we leave the valley, okay?"

"Thank you, thank you, Sylphy. You're a good girl, truly, a good girl."

"Getting thanked for rubbing my chest is a bit..."

While scratching the back of her ear, Sylphy gave a wry smile.

I rubbed her chest at every opportunity after I married her.

Sylphy got used to me fondling her chest all the time pretty much.

I also formed a close attachment to her breasts.

"Rudeus, you can sit behind me tomorrow!"

Eris is burned up with jealousy, saying that while blushing, and ran up to the front row.

Haha.....I am quite popular.

Well we will be exiting the valley soon.

An ambush will definitely come. With that in mind. I became more serious.

Part 2

Upon exiting the Red Dragon's Upper Jaw, a huge forest appeared.

The valley exit is located on a slightly higher altitude.

In the distance from the spreading forest below, I could see a wall.

But because of the forest's height, I can't see the road in the middle of the forest. I can't determine where the ambush will happen.

Whatever happens here, it won't be seen by anyone.

Or so Orsted says.

From here, it seems he can see the exit of the forest from the walls.

In other words, anyone can confirm who is entering and leaving the forest.

On the other hand, from the forest entrance here we can't see the wall.

To an attacker, this is a geographical advantage for them.

A perfect place to ambush us.

"At last, I have returned to this place."

At the entrance to the forest, Sylphy stopped the horse.

Luke was also stopped.

The horse-drawn carriage was also stopped.

As for Ghyslaine and Eris, they also stopped their horse.

One of the servants got down from the driver's seat.

Luke and Sylphy also got down from their horses.

From the horse-drawn carriage, Ariel came out.

She held a small bouquet.

On the roadside, five people walked up to a stone.

It looked like an ordinary stone.

There was nothing decorative about it.

However, on the surface, there are × marks engraved.

Ariel acted first, placing the bouquet on top of the stone, and I followed suit.

The pose of prayer of the Millis church.

Ariel is not a devout believer of Millis.

I've never seen her praying to god.

The same goes for Luke.

I don't know about the attendants, but Sylphy is also different.

In other words, the ones that are resting under the stone are people who served Ariel.

Dead in this forest, in the Red Dragon's Upper Jaw, her Knight escort, her art teacher, or her servant.

I heard that in the Red Dragon's Upper Jaw, many of her escorts died, especially near the border.

So, I will also pray for the time being.

“From here on out, we will be at a greater risk of being ambushed. So, let’s camp here for now and continue our journey tomorrow.”

At Ariel’s words, Sylphy went back to her horse.

Her face seemed to be stiffer than usual.

Part 3

In the evening of that day, I went over our formation once again.

After that, we should take some time to review each member’s specific role to avoid getting disoriented during any upcoming battles.

Ghyslaine and Eris are our main attackers. Sylphy will be our support, who’s able to quickly respond to any situation, and I will be the rear guard, with the Demon Eye of Foresight.

My role is to basically oversee the battle.

Since my eye of foresight can’t see something that is outside of my field of view.

In addition, Elmore and Luke will be protecting Ariel.

I wish that those three could also be better equipped, but it can’t be helped since their power in combat is lacking.

Even if they did fight alongside Ghyslaine and Eris, they would just get in the way.

In any case, to prepare for a surprise attack, they must be at Ariel’s side to protect her.

Using a magic tool to mimic Ariel, Kleene acts as Ariel’s double.

It is a magic tool that can change hair color and facial features.

To make the disguise more convincing, she trimmed her hair to about the same length as Ariel's.

Their heights and figures are different, but ... that can't be helped.

Anyway, for the sake of Ariel's life, those two remaining servants will act as sacrifices.

I know nothing about them, but I'd like to finish this without anybody getting murdered.

Tomorrow, we will move on the assumption that there will be an attack.

"We moved here using the teleportation circle, so won't the assailant be expecting us much later?"

To that someone's question, Ariel replied.

"Senior Minister Darius is a very thorough person. He had already made preparations the moment Father became ill."

Like that.

Who or what kind of enemy will we face? No one knows yet.

But I already shared information about the North Emperor and Water God who were hired by the Asura kingdom.

On top of that, the North Emperor Auber will also become our enemy.

I'm telling them with that warning in mind.

I thought about how to fight him so we could handle this problem more efficiently, but if Auber and Luke are the apostles of Hitogami, there is a possibility that they've already made countermeasures.

Making preparations to fight him, while they make preparations to counter that.

If that happens, I can't even count on my demon eye.

So I will deal with it personally this time.

Warning everyone of Auber's surprise attack, while protecting everyone's safety.

Well, rather than me protecting Ghyslaine and everyone ... I feel like I'm the one being protected.

Anyways, let's do our best so that no one dies.

Part 4

The next day.

We're moving based on the formation discussed at the meeting.

On horseback were Ghyslaine, Eris, Sylphy and I in the front.

Riding the horse-drawn carriage are the two servants and Ariel, followed by Luke at the back of the horse-drawn carriage.

While travelling cautiously along the forest road, we encountered a bend in the path that prevented us from seeing beyond it.

Just before the bend.

On a certain small tree, I found a mark carved into it.

A mark that looks like a \$, a signal that Orsted and I came up with in advance.

It means『There's an ambush ahead.』

Good, we don't need a self-directed play then.

Pushing the capability of my foresight eye to the max, I tighten the grip on my staff.

I also activated Zariff's Arm, so I'm ready to use the magic absorbing stone at a moment's notice.

Blowguns and poison darts may suddenly come flying, or showers of advanced magic may rain down towards the horse-drawn carriage.

In either situation, if I can see it with my demon eye I can avoid it.

However, there wasn't a need for that.

Ghyslaine and Eris are at the front.

Blocking the way of those two are figures of armored soldiers standing shoulder-to-shoulder.

Numbering more than a dozen.

"Halt!"

Slightly ahead, Ghyslaine and Eris stopped their horses.

"Who is it?"

The armored soldier did not answer Ghyslaine's question.

Because of the full face helmet, I cannot see his facial expressions.

Among the armour-clad shoulders there's one wearing flashy conspicuous feathers.

He should be the captain.

"....."

They were silent.

In silence, they just blocked the road.

"Rudi.....get down."

In response to those words, I jumped off the horse, and walked towards Ariel's carriage.

Sylphy is still riding a horse, going ahead.

Taking a position in between Ghyslaine and Eris, she stares at the captain.

"I am Fitts of the Royal Guard!

The one behind me in this carriage is known as the second princess Ariel Anemoi-Asura from the Asura kingdom!

Whose soldiers are you?! State your name! "

A manly voice shouted high.

So cool.

"....."

But the captain does not answer.

Instead, he silently draws his sword.

"!"

Following suit, the other soldiers also draws their sword.

A high-pitched *Jakin* echoed through the forest.

At the same time, soldiers armed to the teeth emerged from the forest making a *Karawarawara* noise.

Most of them have swords, but I only have a staff and we're considerably outnumbered.

"Enemy attack!"

Getting off of his horse, Luke is already taking his stance.

Elmore sitting on the driver's seat is clutching her whip with tension.

Inside the horse drawn carriage, Kleene disguised herself as Ariel.

"Uraaaa!"

"Gaaaaa~!"

Already Ghyslaine and Eris have engaged the soldiers up ahead.

Their swords cut down the soldiers so fast that it didn't even leave an afterimage.

The two are so fast that the soldiers were defeated before they could even unsheathe their swords.

"Leave the magic to me!"

Sylphy had to precisely control her magic so as to not hit Eris and Ghyslaine.

I can't see, but it appears there are magicians behind the soldiers.

The number of enemy soldiers is almost thirty.

Yet troops continue to pour out of the forest, it looks like there are still more of them.

Despite this, it seems such an advantage in numbers means nothing against Ghyslaine and Eris.

The enemy troops are being decimated in the blink of an eye.

Eris is moving freely on her own.

Ghyslaine moves to covers her blind spot.

Furthermore, Sylphy supported them both with magic.

The trio constantly repositioned themselves to avoid being surrounded, and they're slaughtering the armored knights.

They are strong Those three people.

It will be alright even if I leave them alone.

"Luke-senpai! Are there any enemies behind us?"

"No!"

Response from Luke protecting the back of the horse-drawn carriage.

It's look like the enemy wants to lure us into a retreat.

A trap?

It's a trap.

"What will we do, withdraw?"

"No, it seem that it's possible to break through, so"

Looking ahead, the flood of soldiers have parted in two.

Then, a person appears between them. Ghyslaine and Eris stopped moving.

The person was smaller than I expected.

Only about a meter tall.

Hobbit Race.

His small body wrapped in full body armor.

His armor polished clean, so clean that it shone brilliantly in the light.

With his short stature, he totally looked like a disco ball.

I felt when he came out in front, the soldiers surrounding him felt fairly relieved.

The feeling of being in a Sensei's presence.

Apparently, he seems to be powerful.

Can he be Auber?

"My name is the North King Wii Taa.

One of the Three Swords of North God.

『Light and Darkness』 Wii Taa. "

..... Who?

"I see you are 『Black Wolf』 Ghyslaine.

I challenge you to a duel! ! "

Disco ball draws his sword.

Fitting his short stature, it's a short sword 30 centimeters in length.

But the blade shines so brightly as if it was reflected with a mirror.

However, a man-to-man fight at this moment?

It is a situation of dozens versus three already, I wonder what kind of intention he has?

"Hmph."

Ghyslaine pointed her blade, letting out a snort.

It was directed to the Wii Taa that pointed his sword.

"Very well. I, Ghyslaine the 『Black Wolf』 Sword King, shall be your opponent."

While holding a reserve sword on her waist, Ghyslaine was facing the North King.

So, the flow of time has stopped.

The grunts stopped moving, after while checking their surrounding they began to fall back.

Sylphy also fell back glancing warily at the soldier's movements.

What remains is an atmosphere for a duel against the man called North King.

But Eris can't read the mood.

She lunges ahead toward the retreating soldiers.

"Daaaaaaa!"

"Ah! Hey! Eris!"

Sylphy also enters the fray haphazardly.

Covering Eris's back, a helter-skelter battle started.

Are those two people alright?

The number of enemies is great.

I look at them for a moment, they aren't taking any attacks. Seems there is plenty of room for comfort.

..... Alright, it's okay to leave them for now.

I want to support them, but I can't move from this place.

Due to Eris's rampage, the distance between the horse drawn carriage and her widened a bit.

Still, Auber has not shown himself yet.

Until he appears, I cannot move.

Auber is skilled at surprise attacks.

If we divert our attention, he may launch a surprise attack from behind us.

It's a very textbook tactic, but it would be the best time for it.

A moment of distraction.

He would strike during that split second opportunity.

Especially against powerful magicians, he would hit them during their incantations.

Therefore, Orsted said.

If it turns into a skirmish, don't use any magic until that guy shows himself.

Even if your ally is in a pinch, don't give them any support.

If you're patient, Auber would change his target, he will launch an attack on those who are most off guard.

In that moment, you could snipe him.

Therefore, I cannot move.

I need to be alert of my surroundings with my eyes wide open.

Even so, I feel concerned.

Instead of the North Emperor, the North King Wii Taa appears out of nowhere.

If another strong guy comes out and it's not Auber, I guess I'll need to give the order to retreat.

"Ugh, kut!"

"Hahaa~! 『Black Wolf』 Ghyslaine! Your skill is rotting!"

And against Wii Taa, Ghyslaine is being pressed back a bit.

Or rather, Ghyslaine's movement is strange.

When Ghyslaine tries to go in for an attack, she stops for a moment and turns her face.

Wii Taa doesn't miss a chance like that.

He dashes into Ghyslaine's body at a speed you wouldn't expect from his short limbs and launches a shower of attacks.

His thrusts only made shallow wounds on Ghyslaine's skin, it looks like she avoided a fatal blow.

Since the beginning of their duel, Ghyslaine has yet to take a step forward to attack.

She would ready her stance and motion an attack, but turns away each time for some reason, allowing Wii Taa to counter.

Something happened.

But, I don't know what it is from my position.

What did you do?

I try to observe Wii Taa.

He is as sparkly and shiny as a disco ball, and is hard to keep an eye on.

While he moves in to strike Ghyslaine, he puts out his left hand.

His left hand is not holding anything.

Then, is he using magic?

Ghyslaine turns away her face.

Was it sand?

You're trying to blind her?

No, It doesn't seem that way.

I don't see anything coming out from his hand.

But, there's no doubt that Wii Taa's left hand causes Ghyslaine to turn away.

Ghyslaine couldn't look at him whenever his left hand pointed towards her direction.

..... Oh, is that how it is?

Light.

By reflecting sunlight with that mirror-like armor, he robs Ghyslaine of her sight.

Every time Ghyslaine goes in for an attack, he blinds her.

What a dirty trick!

However, Ghyslaine looks like she's having difficulty.

If she continues on like this, she might lose.

Should I cover for her?

What should I do?

If I don't act now it will be too late.

First of all, is Auber really here?

Do I keep guard or leave Ghyslaine to die?

.....

All right.

I began to pour magic into Aqua Hartia.

Using Earth and Water magic.

In other words, the usual quagmire.

Melded magic -.

" 『Mud Rain』! "

In a moment the clouds cover the sky.

The falling raindrops are brown like chocolate.

It quickly covers the battlefield.

Rain that contains mere mud.

It did not have any offensive power.

As it falls on the ground, it turns the ground slick and loose which robs the soldiers of their mobility.

Some slip and some fall over.

Since Eris and Ghyslaine trained their lower body, the mud has no impact on them.

As for Sylphy, it dyes her hair brown, but let's set that aside for now.

"Nuooo?"

As Wii Taa's polished armor becomes muddy, the disco ball loses its light.

"Gaaaaaaa!"

The yell of Ghyslaine's fighting spirit resonated through the woods.

From the blade near her waist, Ghyslaine fires off a sword of light.

Wii Taa tumbled to avoid it, but blood was gushing from his shoulder.

With this, the winner has been decided.

I continued to be vigilant against Auber.....

Then, I looked back.

"What?"

"?"

Right behind us, there was a man.

I saw a strange person.

Wearing a rainbow colored jacket, knee length pants, with three

sword attached to his waist. There is a peacock tattoo on his cheek, and his hairstyle was like a satellite dish.

He's wearing a dirt-colored cloak on his back.

And from that cloak, a trail of silky sand spills down.

At the end of this trail, a hole was spotted in Luke's blind spot, who was supposed to be watching our back.

This fellow, he was hiding in the hole he dug up in the road.

"....."

His features and clothing matched the description.

This guy is the North Emperor Auber.

"..... You found me."

The next moment, my foresight eye saw Auber's movement.

<He draws a sword with his right hand>

"At this distance against a magician.....sorry for the sneak attack!"

<Auber swings the sword downward.>

I immediately react with my left hand.

The left hand where Zariff's Arm is attached.

Although the arm feels no resistance from the weight, Auber is still faster.

"『Arm, Fly 』!"

"Fuooo!?"

My artificial arm flew off at a ridiculous speed.

Despite that, Auber barely evaded it with a backflip while tilting his neck, dodging the arm.

Making a [Badzun] sound, the artificial arm lodges itself in a distant tree.

While holding the sword, Auber glances back and forth between the arm that flew and me with rounded eyes.

"W, What.....the....."

My heart is beating rapidly.

I knew that Auber would attack with his tricks.

Even though I knew about it from Orsted.....damn.

Is this the result of not following his directions?

Now I have to fight Auber one-on-one.

My opponent is a North Emperor.

While he isn't necessarily weak when fighting normally, his specialty is in surprise attacks.

But... I have heard of the actions that I should take after exposing this figure.

It is possible to win, I'm fine, calm down, I'm strong, I'm strong, I'm Strahan, I'm Stallone.

"Rudeus the 『Quagmire』."

Auber did not attack immediately.

While standing there, he spoke to me.

"Although I have heard the rumors, you are indeed strong."

Why are you not coming at me?

Although this method cannot be used if you are not coming at me.....

"..... Where did you hear my name?"

"From a certain beast over there. When I was teaching sword art to that beast, she always said [Rudeus is awesome!]."

So it was Eris.

"A man who could tame that beast, would be a praiseworthy man. Really, like the rumor said.....even his arm can fly."

It seems he is fascinated by my Rocket Punch. ^[1]

And I'm being watched with a vigilant eye, as if I will try some other weird trick.

What a bad-mannered guy.

It's not like I'm some kind of rare animal.....

But, it's good that he's being cautious.

After all, in the edge of my vision, Ghyslaine has defeated Wii Taa and is coming towards us.

It's not a far distance, she should be here soon.

If it's two-on-one, our chances of winning will increase tremendously.

"Eris, and Ghyslaine.

Silent Fitts, and Rudeus of the Quagmire.

As a precaution, we have brought Wii Taa but.....

Since I couldn't kill Rudeus, this will be hard on us."

Auber convinces himself and nods.

I wonder if he'll come.

"But, there is no shortage of opponents!"

He's coming.

But, in the current situation, if I can hold him for even a few seconds, I can attack him with Ghyslaine in a pincer maneuver.

And, I know roughly what technique Auber uses.

I can do this.

I can bring him down.

"My name is, North Emperor Auber Corvette!"

Auber drew the sword with his left hand and sheathed the sword in his right hand.

I also started pouring magic into my staff in response to that.....

"This is..... Goodbye!"

Auber started running.

Not toward me, but toward Ghyslaine.

Huh?

Did he just say goodbye?

"Auber!"

"Oh, it's Ghyslaine! Long time no see!"

"Gaaaaaaa!"

"As expected, you haven't changed at all."

Before anyone noticed, Auber had thrown the bag that was in his hand.

The bag flies to Ghyslaine in a smooth arc.

Ghyslaine promptly cuts the bag while it is still in mid air.

Upon being cleaved, some kind of smoke suddenly scatters from the bag.

Ghyslaine face is showered by it immediately.

This is bad.

"『Stone Cannon』!"

"Uooh~~!"

Auber easily avoided the rock cannonball that came flying from behind with a fluid movement.

Can Ghyslaine give chase no, that's impossible.

Flour was showered on her face, making her eyes shed tears uncontrollably and causing her to sneeze repeatedly.

Mixed with spices, it's a special tear gas from Auber.

Slipping around Ghyslaine like a cockroach, Auber was getting close to Sylphy and Eris who were slaughtering the soldiers.

"Retreat! Retreat! Redo again!"

With those words, men begin to escape into the forest all at once.

And, Eris noticed Auber at the same time.

Moving her body to protect Sylphy, she was trying to intercept him.

"Ugaaaaaa!!"

"『My sword, ablaze!』"

At the same time the chanting stopped, Auber's sword was covered in flames.

While sidestepping in and quickly removing something from his waist, Auber put something in his mouth.

I also know this trick.

I can make it.

"Buuuu~~!"

"『Water Wall!』"

Oil gushes from Auber's mouth to ignite the flaming sword, and attacks Eris.

But the magic I launched managed to stop it.

The fire hit the water wall and was extinguished in a moment.

Eris does not care about the water wall in front of her.

So as to tear to pieces both the opponent and my magical attacks,

she slashed her raised sword diagonally downward from the shoulder, assailing Auber.

"Taaaaaa!"

A sound of *Zan~tsu*, was heard.

With a thud, the upper body of Auber, who was divided, fell to the ground.

"Alright!"

"Che."

While I was delighted, Eris clicked her tongue.

When I looked closely, what fell to the ground was not Auber's upper body.

It's a log.

Without realising it, a log had fallen on the ground.

The log wrapped in a sand covered cloak.

N?

I wonder what happened.

It should have been seen with my Foresight Eye, but I do not know what happened.

And at that moment, I thought that something was flying towards the log. A Talon Claw.

A claw with a rope flew toward the log.

Catching onto the cloth and pulling it from a distance.

The cloth flew lightly in the air and settled into the man that was holding the tip of the rope.

In the forest, there was Auber, wearing a cloak and hiding behind some flowers.

Auber, that he would recover his cloak with that claw...

Is that cloak some kind of magic item?

To allow the party wearing the cloak to instantly swap out like that...

Was it Utsusemi no Jutsu [Substitute Art]?

I didn't hear about this, boss!

"You've improved your skills, Mad Dog! I'll be leaving first! Let us meet again!"

"Wait!"

"Wait, Eris!"

Eris tried to chase Auber, but she was stopped by Sylphy.

"There are still soldiers in the forest, don't chase after him alone!"

After hearing these words, Eris looked back towards me.

Then, to the direction where Auber disappeared.

And clicking her tongue, she sheathed her sword.

"Hmph."

Eris walked back towards me unhappily,

Sylphy continued to vigilantly search for remaining enemies while holding her wand.

For now, there seems to be no signs of any enemies nearby.

Only corpses remain.

"Whew....."

For now, the raid will end with this.

But, Auber may launch another surprise attack, so we must stay alert.

We should at least stay vigilant until the night.

Part 5

After the battle.

The enemy: nearly destroyed.

Damage against us: almost nil.

The only damage was Ghyslaine's sneezing and tears that did not stop for almost an hour.

Since detoxification and healing magic didn't work we were a little bit impatient, but the symptoms subsided when flushed with water magic.

I often feel the weakness of healing and detoxification magic.

Maybe it doesn't cure hay fever either.

It seems that there is no hay fever in this world...

I immediately helped to clean up the corpses we had piled by the roadside.

Normally it might have been okay to just leave them, but right now we were still in the forest.

If you leave dead people alone here, their bodies will be revived into the undead.

Basically, leaving corpses in a place like this is forbidden.

We stripped the armor, piled up the remains together, and then burned the corpses.

"....."

While going about the work, Luke's complexion became grim.

The more he worked, the grimmer his expression became.

This wasn't because he knew the identity of the corpses. Rather, his focus was on the armor the corpses were wearing.

I wonder if there is something on it.

"Hey, Luke. This crest is....."

I found the reason immediately..

As for what it was, it could be found on a lot of the corpses.

On their armor, a crest was emblazoned.

The crest symbolized a certain lord from the Asura Kingdom.

That crest was from a place known as the Milbotts territory.

It is a territory that is owned by one of the four major noble families that had a strong military force in the Asura Kingdom.

The soldiers who attacked us came from the faction that ruled over that territory.

That means...

Luke muttered what I had already guessed.

"Foolishness"

The lord of Milbotts territory...

Philemon Notus Greyrat has betrayed Ariel.

Notes

1. Mazinger Z reference

Chapter 178 - Conjecture

Part 1

One hour after the ambush.

After dealing with the dead bodies, we've set up camp in a secluded part of the forest.

Surrounded by a stone fence, we're in the middle of a war council around a bonfire.

"Foolishnesssuch a foolish....."

Luke had a stupid look.

From hearing that Philemon turned his back on us, he murmured rashly with vacant eyes.

Was it a surprise?

No, only to Luke.

Ariel and the others look nonchalant.

It seems like they have considered that possibility.

Only Luke is shocked, since he is Philemon's relative.

Or was it from the lies Hitogami fed him?

What did Hitogami tell him?

And has the lie already been exposed?

Knowing him, I doubt he'll do something so convenient.

Should I... prod him for answers?

No, I should wait for an opportunity.

"Ariel-sama."

"What is it Rudeus-sama?"

"I think Auber will attack again whether we are in this forest, before we cross the border, or after we cross the border. I think he will attack us on a regular basis."

Ariel was puzzled.

"I suppose so?"

Such a situation, we have no choice but to face it. That was our assumption from the start.

"I was able to fight him this time, but Auber was a more formidable enemy than I thought, on top of that, the number of enemies in this raid are greater than I thought..... Apparently, the other side is going all-out to kill you, Ariel-sama. For the next attack, they will definitely come more prepared than the last time."

"..... is it that difficult to just fight them off?"

Hearing Ariel's word, I nod.

"I won't say it's difficult.....but. Perhaps, the border checkpoint will be the next ambush. It might be a trap I think "

"But without teleportation magic we can only move onward."

The conversation is going exactly as I expected.

Talking to Ariel is so easy.

It feels like she already knows what I want to say.

"Yeah, but if you already know they will lay a trap all we need to do is avoid it."

"Well Then, is there another way to cross the border without walking into their trap?"

"Yes"

"How?"

Before I realize it, all eyes are focused on Ariel and I.

I feel that it a little hard to talk.

"Around the border, there are bandits and slave traders whose main occupation is smuggling. Let's negotiate with them. If all goes well, we may cross the border without passing the checkpoint."

After hearing my suggestion, Ariel was posing thoughtfully saying [Hmm].

Sylphy is giving a somewhat quizzical face.

Neither Ghyslaine nor Eris have heard about this.

"Rudeus-sama, didn't you said earlier that we shouldn't be doing guilty things?"

"Yes. It does not change that regard. But, I seem to have misjudged a little about the severity of the situation. My intention still won't change."

"..... Is that so?"

I was nodding while saying that, Ariel seemed convinced.

She stared at Sylphy and then looks at the surroundings, while her eyebrows are making a '/ \' shape.

"Sylphy, What do you think?"

"....I think it is a good idea. I do not know how credible the thief band is, but if Rudi suggested it, I think it is less dangerous than crossing the checkpoint."

"I'm not satisfied with Rudi's suggestion. Why didn't he suggest that in advance? Also, why did you give that suggestion only after we were ambushed? It seemed as though you were waiting for this attack? "

"Luke?"

Luke gulped, and Ariel looks at Luke.

He slowly raises his head, as if he saw a ghost.

Looking at me with pondering eyes.

"You, what are you plotting ... ?"

He said clearly.

His voice is trembling.

With a face full of doubt.

He watches me.

"Your movement, it was as if you already knew that Auber would launch a surprise attack."

"I had already predicted this."

"It looked like you also knew his fighting style."

"That's thanks to my foresight eye"

Just Luke.

Shouldn't you be grateful that I checked your blind spot?

"Auber's retreat seems too suspicious."

"If I was killed by his first strike, then I guess he would've pressed the attack without retreating."

"I know, but why didn't you stop that guy from escaping?"

".....I could have stopped him if I used a large scale attack magic. But in that case, Sylphy and Eris would have been in my line of fire. Also, there's a possibility that he has some magic items to evade my magic attack."

".....Really?"

Hey.

Your tone sounds like I've joined hands with Auber.

..... Oh, is that so?

It was this sort of scenario?

I joined hands with Auber, and Darius and orchestrated that ambush. That's the first conclusion most people make.

You've got me.

If you just think a little bit you will surely see that I'm not allying with Auber and Darius....

"..... Luke-senpai. Didn't I help Ariel-sama under your request?"

"I certainly did request your aid..... But your actions are strange. My father would not betray me. Father is..."

Luke's behavior is suspicious.

So this is the the work of Hitogami.

Just what kind of advice did Hitogami give to Luke ?

Wait, maybe Luke is not visible to Hitogami right now?

That should be the case with Orsted nearby.

The presence of Orsted acts as a jammer for Hitogami.

It's possible that his advice for Luke has missed the target.

..... Or maybe that Hitogami has already discarded Luke.

".....What the heck are you saying now?"

Eris looks frustratedly at Luke.

Like she's ready to beat him down anytime.

Sylphy looks alternatively between Luke and I with a sharp look.

Ghyslaine looks like someone with a huge [?] on her head.

"Ariel-sama."

With a stern face, Luke turned his face toward Ariel.

"I don't agree. Rudeus's recent actions have been strange."

"Is... that so?"

"Also, I worry about the credibility of the alleged band of thieves. Although I agree that we should avoid the checkpoint, but I think we should head back, and request help from Perugius-sama "

Asking for Perugius's help, huh....

Indeed, you have a point.

To ask for one or two of Perugius's familiars to act as escorts, this will enhance our strength and will enable us to force our way through.

Yeah, I also feel that this is quite a good idea.

I'm fine with anything as long as Ariel is safe.

But I must get in touch with Tris and her band of thieves.

Besides, I don't always have to stay together with Ariel.

However....if I leave her there is the possibility that Ariel might die.

".....Elmore, Kleene, what do you think?"

"I support Luke-sama"

"Me too."

"Is that so?"

The two servants are likely to support Luke.

With this it's 2 to 3?

But, this party is not a democracy.

The leader of this party is Ariel.

Everything was decided by Ariel.

Well, if it can't be helped, I will try to contact Tris alone.

I'll make the excuse that I want to do reconnaissance in the country beforehand or something.

But will it be suspicious if I go alone?

..... Maybe I should bring Eris or Sylphy.

"....."

Ariel did not consult with Ghyslaine or Eris.

A shadow covered her face while she takes her time to consider the situation.

She narrows her eyes, staring at the bonfire, indulging in deep thought.

"Okay."

After a while, she looked up.

Looking alternately between Luke and I.

After looking at us twice, she stopped her gaze at Luke.

"I will go with Rudeus-sama's plan."

"What!"

Luke begins to get angry.

"Why?"

"Perugius-sama won't be so generous as to lend a hand to the king that fled from her own kingdom. If it's only at this level, I won't rely on him."

Saying that, Ariel winks at me.

..... You mean, you intentionally sided with me?

I wonder why?

Perhaps Ariel wanted me to owe her a favor.

Although it was convenient for me.....

"But, that's putting the cart before the horse. Working with the likes of thieves! We won't know what they're plotting against Ariel-sama -"

"Luke."

Luke is blindsided by Ariel's decision.

"What's wrong with you all of the sudden? Suspecting Rudeus-sama suddenly?"

"But father is"

"Didn't we already discuss the possibility that Philemon would betray us from before? Didn't you say that if it's father it may happen?"

"I certainly did think so before. However, I am certain that I've heard....."

And, Luke shut his mouth before he spoke.

Ariel also seem a little surprised by his reaction.

Luke was wide-eyed, and lips trembling.

"Luke, by chance did you hear it from your brother?"

Ariel stops abruptly.

Then, in a different tone, she asked Luke.

"Luke Notus Greyrat, who are you?"

Luke looked at Ariel with an understanding look.

Then he shifted his gaze to Sylphy, me, and rest of the party.

After seeing the anxiousness in our eyes, he looks back at Ariel.

Kneeling without diverting his gaze, Luke said looking up.

"I am your knight."

"And I am your princess."

Luke looks down, Ariel nodded.

Like a shadow has been casted off, those two share a satisfied smile.

All that needs to be said has been said.

That was all that was necessary.

With such satisfied smiles on them, Sylphy and the others looked relieved as well.

"Let's depart. Rudeus-sama please lead the way."

"Yes."

Anyways, with this we're contacting the bandits.

I will not betray Luke.

But anxiety remained.

With this conversation, there's no doubt that Luke is an apostle of Hitogami.

Part 2

Returning to the highway then entering the forest again.

I already knew the location of the band of thieves.

Enter the forest from a certain mark on a rock, then head straight to the East.

The band of thieves in question is located in the East side of the forest.

Apparently under a cliff at the foot of a mountain.

However, our pace is slow.

Since our horse-drawn carriage was disassembled.

Ariel tried to ride a horse at first, but after seeing how high up it was she came down immediately.

Since there is a risk of falling from the horse.

We're moving through an area that's usually impassable while

leading horses.

If you clear the way with magic, you won't have to take a detour.

Although in that case, it will be easier for the enemy to track us.

However, if we're fighting against demons on the way, we will leave a trail no matter what.

Well I guess we don't need to care about it too much.

Along the way, we rested many times.

Because Ariel complained that her feet were sore repeatedly.

It's because she is not familiar with walking through the forest.

Fortunately, Ariel did not voice any complaints aside from that.

Sylphy repeatedly applied healing magic to Ariel's feet, and waited for her to catch her breath.

"....."

There is no conversation in particular.

Concerning the Apostles of Hitogami.

What made them apostles is the advice given by Hitogami.

Luke, Apostle of Hitogami.

He has gotten some advice.

No doubt about it.

But it is unclear when he received it, or what the advice was about.

Looking at my example, Hitogami did not give me advice often.

He came out frequently on occasion, but on average he comes about once a year.

If Luke's situation is similar, he would've received advice maybe once or twice.

Most likely, Luke received advice just before he came to my place.

It's to make me an ally for Ariel.

Right.

That advice is directly linked to Luke's action.

But after this attack, I feel that it is a little different.

Perhaps, Luke received advice about the Notus house.

And now, he has been treating me awfully.

Like before, he is giving me a threatening attitude accusing me as the culprit.

For example, 『 I'm trying to take over the Notus house. 』 or ...?

No. Stupid.

If you just think about it a little, you'll know that I don't want that.

If I'm really interested in that, I wouldn't live in the Magic City Sharia and I would've been more aggressive towards Ariel.

People value things differently.

If you value something, you tend to assume it's coveted.

And if you're told that someone's aiming for the same thing, you're prone to believe it.

If you're Luke what would you want the most, perhaps he wants to become the Head of the Notus house.

Although I don't know for sure.

This time, Philemon betrayed Ariel.

This might or might not be due to the advice of Hitogami.

The diary didn't say anything about this...

No, Eris was at Philemon's mansion in that world's diary.

Eris in Boreas, Boreas belonged to the first prince's faction.

If you think about it, even without Hitogami's intervention, Philemon would have most likely betrayed us.

So Philemon isn't an apostle after all.

Given his influence and ability, Darius is still the most likely candidate.

That's right, Darius.

Another apostle.

Senior Minister Darius Silva Ganius.

I wonder what kind of advice he received.

At the very least, he would have gotten information such as 『Ariel is heading to the Royal Palace』.

Ariel had said, 『Darius is supposed to have predicted our return at the time the king became ill.』.

However, our enemy's force is powerful.

The North Emperor and a North King.

Both should be valuable forces.

How would you prepare against an opponent of uncertain strength?

In regards to the second prince, I'll discuss that another time.

We've reached here through teleportation magic.

I don't know how long it takes for information that 『Ariel is heading to the Royal Palace』 to reach the Asura kingdom from magic city Sharia.

But, the information shouldn't be fast enough to allow Auber and Wii Taa to ambush us.

That explains why Auber came straight for me.

Instead of targeting Ariel, he chose me.

When I think about it.

..... There is a possibility that Darius's target is not Ariel, but me.

Either way is fine.

For Hitogami and Darius, Ariel and I are both hurdles.

His advice must be something like that.

It's easy to understand.

The last apostle remains unknown.

I'm still pondering about Auber's last sentence.

Auber knew that I was in the party. He mentioned that [Wii Taa was brought].

Does that mean

No, Darius might have known about it.

I can't determine from this attack alone who could be an apostle of Hitogami.

It seems the North Emperor knew of my participation, but he might have also heard it from Darius.

Either way, Auber's an opponent I have to defeat.

Even so, facing Auber's mysterious fighting style.

As well as his mastery of a variety of tools.

Such as oil and tear gas.

I'm sure that he still has some tricks up his sleeve.

This time he gave off a very dazzling impression, but according to Orsted, he's strong even if it comes down to a regular sword fight.

Although I've heard about him, it is a big difference when you're watching it with your own eyes.

I wasn't caught off guard covering for Ghyslaine. But all it takes is one mistake, one bad choice, and he could have taken me out from behind.

I want to take him out for sure next time...

Though Orsted said that killing this guy is hard.

Even though he stood out so much, he disappeared so easily into the forest.

The name of North Emperor isn't just for show.

Well, rather than Peacock Sword or North Emperor, he gave off the feeling of a ninja.

No, he is a NINJA.

A NINJA in a parallel world.

..... Using oil and tear gas, I wonder if I should try to imitate him.

Part 3

Midnight.

I contacted Orsted.

Since the battle just ended, there was a lot to report about.

"Was Auber hard to catch?"

"Yes, I'm sorry. Even though you told me how to counter him....."

"No, It is fine. It's easier said than done. Besides, if Auber is determined to escape, then he cannot be killed."

Auber's movements after he decided to withdraw were fast.

His pattern was complex, I cannot predict what he will do.

But Orsted seems to know most of his patterns,

I wasn't able to counter them at all.

Well, in that case, Orsted can just kill him if he wanted to, but...

..... No, let's not go in a direction that relies on him so much.

Faith alone can't solve everything.

Leave Auber to me.

I need to do it.

I believe I can.

"Anyways, who is Wii Taa?"

"Someone might have called him. Perhaps at Hitogami's proposal."

"..... Well, what kind of guy he is?"

Just in case, I should learn about my enemy's war potential.

“『Light and darkness』 Wii Taa.

In the North God Style faction, he is a disciple of Kalman III. Indeed, he has been the bodyguard of the Notus house for a long time."

Notus?

Perhaps he's Luke's, or maybe Paul's home tutor?

"As his name suggests, he is good at blinding his enemies using light from his polished mirrors and armor in the daytime. At night, he inks his entire body, using fog and a magic tool that emits black smoke to blend into the darkness."

Thus, in the daytime, dirty his armor, during the nighttime, light up the battlefield, that will counter him.

Supposedly.

"His sword skills aren't bad, but... Ghyslaine and Eris should be able to handle him."

That makes sense.

Although he uses a cheap technique, it seems that it only

supplements his skills.

There's no way anyone can become a North King using cheap tricks alone.

"Still, we don't know who else the enemy has employed."

"At King Rank?"

"No Sword King of course... but how many more Water Kings, Water Emperors, or Sword Emperors might be involved?"

"How many does he need to hire to crush us?"

"No, Darius probably only needs one or two guards with the Water God there."

Because the enemy has the force of someone as strong as the Water God, the enemy might have become complacent.

Hitogami might have suggested all the additional hires in that case...

But it's only advice after all.

"Since the Three Swords of North God were all present inside Asura Kingdom, the possibility exists that all of them have been hired."

"Three Swords of North God, who are they?"

"Ah, about the counters to them, let me tell you."

Three Swords of North God.

Self proclaimed leaders of the North God Style. Four in all.

Each with their own unique set of skills and particular features.

After teaching me how to counter each of them, we proceed to the next topic.

"What about Luke?"

"It's a good sign. Hitogami can see the future, but because of it, his predictions are not always accurate. If you manipulate multiple Apostles, fractures often occur."

In short, Hitogami does not give advice with the thought of cooperation between the Apostles.

This time, Luke was upset about Darius or there might have been a discrepancy with the advice about Auber.

Hitogami's advice might be accurate in some part, but the rest are full of lies.

For Luke, the advices that he was given might have been mostly decorated with convenient lies.

"Do you think there's a possibility that Hitogami has discarded Luke?"

"There is a great possibility. Luke's fate is weak. Hitogami isn't expecting anything from him as a pawn. Just that, in order to see your action, he was used as a watchdog. However, with me nearby, his monitoring ability is extremely limited."

"... But, since he can only control three pawns, doing that seems like such a waste."

When he hears that, Orsted makes a frown.

"For Hitogami who is omniscient, what he fears most is an invisible opponent. Since he is fulfilling the role of surveillance, there is no need for more."

".....I see."

From Hitogami's point of view, the ability he relies on the most is being sealed.

Without Luke, he won't even be able to predict the changing future.

He would have to weakly tackle us without even any hints.

Considering that, he probably won't release Luke.

It's also a form of control.

Uh-huh, it's too complicated, then let's leave it alone for now.

"Is it safe to leave Luke alone for now?"

"Yes. But be wary. When Hitogami gets reckless/careless, he will make the apostles do excessive things without thinking of their consequences."

"Yes, that's right, isn't it."

For example when he sent me to attack Orsted.

"Kill him before he makes a big move."

".....Before I do that, may I talk to Luke?"

"What will you talk about?"

"Whether or not he is in contact with Hitogami and whether or not he received any advice. So as to convince him to not believe the words of Hitogami. Perhaps he will become a double agent for us."

"Hou"

I feel like it will be a wasted effort.

Luke is suspicious of me.

It must be from something Hitogami has said to him.

When it comes to trust, I've never really made the effort to get him to trust me.

My relationship with Luke is just that.

"I think it's a waste but try it."

I was given permission.

Consider the timing, only to talk afterwards.

I might just be looking for trouble, but still.

"So far, things are going well. Hitogami hasn't made a good move yet. Let's hope it stays that way."

"Haha!"

Thus, the regular report was completed.

Part 4

I left Orsted's place.

The plan is on track.

At least I think that's the case.

After the fight with Auber in the Red Dragon's Upper Jaw, the next step is to make Tris our companion.

A few things are different from what we expected, but it doesn't affect the plan that much.

In that case, I should move forward with confidence.

Despite saying that, I'm a bit scared at how smooth things are going.

Especially when it comes to Luke, everything might come apart at the seams before I realize it.

Though Orsted apparently doesn't think so.

Probably because he hasn't personally witnessed the situation.

Or maybe he's thinking the issues are somewhat negligible.

Or perhaps I'm just overthinking things.

What Orsted is thinking, I do not know.

He didn't make a move because there are no problems.

Although I understand.

When you move recklessly, things turn for the worst.

[It's better to regret doing it, than to regret not doing it.] A phrase I've often heard in my previous life.

But I might regret no matter what I choose.

The status quo is an option as well.

I want to make a choice that leaves me with as little regret as possible.

As I recall Luke's conversation with Ariel, Luke might have continued his line with just a little push.

I will try to bring up the subject when the opportunity arises.

I haven't decided on the details of what to talk about yet, and I might be stirring up trouble.

However, it might be good to mention the risk caused by Hitogami.

Not speaking to him might be good, though.

"....."

While thinking that, I head back to camp.

I report that the surrounding area is safe.

The people who were on patrol today were Kleene, Sylphy and I.

My patrol was short, it didn't even take 30 minutes.

During those 30 minutes, the silhouettes around the bonfire increased by one.

Three shadows.

Did someone wake up?

If there is a monster attack while I'm not here, Ghyslaine or Eris might have woken up.

But the figure wasn't that big.

Though it was larger than the delicate and petite Sylphy.

And about the size of an average woman, about the same as Kleene.

Her back is higher than those two, but she wasn't Eris.

Could it be Elmore?

Why is she up?

When I approached thinking that, one of the silhouettes got up.

"It's a nice night. Rudeus-sama"

Behind the campfire stood Ariel. The light from the campfire casted a shadow on her beautiful face.

She has a face that made Kleene and Sylphy worry.

"How about we take a little stroll?"

Ariel said, flashing a fearless smile.

Chapter 179 - Ariel's Choice

Part 1

Under the moonlight.

I am taking a stroll with Ariel in the forest.

Just the two of us.

Sylphy, the two servants, and Luke aren't here.

Ariel was holding a torch, she led the way.

If we go too far, we'll end up going to the place where I just met Orsted a while ago.

"Rudeus-sama, I've been meaning to have a talk in private for a long time now."

Kleene and Sylphy didn't follow us.

Ariel stopped.

She says she has something important to tell me, so she has brought me into the forest.

A midnight tryst.

I wonder what she needs to talk about.

It doesn't seem like she's making me into her attendant for going to the toilet.

I won't be surprised if you're going to show something to me that you usually didn't show to others, but I don't know why you're taking me along.

Ariel and I walked for about five minutes away from the campfire.

Making sure we were far enough away, she looked back.

"Rudeus-sama, I want to keep the contents of this conversation a secret, that's why I'm doing all this."

Let's stop the jokes for now.

Ariel wanted to talk about a serious matter.

".....What did you want to discuss?"

Although I've already expected this, but to be safe, I asked her.

Showing a fearless smile, Ariel caressed my chin.

Hey, touching is NG! ^[1]

"Well, we can take our time since the night is still long."

"Even if the night is long, the time for us to sleep is short."

"Don't be that way, I just want to be able to talk to you freely, Rudeus-sama."

After she says that, Ariel let go and sat down by the nearest tree root.

For the time being, I should fully activate my demon eye.

It's not that I'm wary of Ariel.

It's just in case if something were to happen to Ariel.

"That reminds me, about Sylphy and Eris-sama. They get along surprisingly well."

Is this what we're going to talk about?

No, it's just a conversation starter.

"Well originally I thought they would be quarreling a lot, but it seems to me that they're getting along really well."

To be honest, I always wondered if taking Eris as a wife might lead to conflict and chaos in my family.

I was wondering if Roxy and Sylphy ought to be quarreling more.

But you shouldn't quarrel with family.

"The other day, while Rudeus-sama was out patrolling, I met those two and talked about this and that."

"Such as?"

"She said, [You'll be fine if you leave it to Rudeus.] For Eris-sama, staying silent and hearing all you say is important. Rudi also make mistakes, and, I'm no good unless I'm following Sylphy's guidance."

Being relied on is nice, but honestly Eris, you really are overestimating me too much.

It's nice of you that you're trying to help me behind Sylphy's back.

I think those two are still anxious about me becoming Orsted's underling.

Without making a complaint or disagreement, you two are willing to follow me.

"Those two are exact opposites. Eris-sama will fight and stand in front of Rudeus-sama. Sylphy will support Rudeus-sama from the back....."

"Doing all they can to cover for me, I can only offer them my gratitude...."

My love and gratitude for those two.

It's something that I won't forget even until my death.

"What's interesting is seeing Sylphy scold Eris-sama like a little sister that has done something wrong."

"A bad little sister?"

"Yes. Eris-sama has taken the lecture to heart, even though Sylphy was reluctant."

I wonder.

I didn't notice until she said that.

I mean, now that I think about it, I haven't spoken much with those two recently.

I'm being too narrow minded.

I thought that I was familiar with how Eris thought, and so I ignored it.

..... I have not seen Sylphy looking after Eris with half baked feelings.

"It's interesting how Sylphy is looking after her junior."

"Ariel-sama even notices these sorts of things huh?"

"Unlike Rudeus-sama who misses small details like that."

While saying that, Ariel sends me an alluring glance.

She's bewitching.

Stop blatantly showing such temptation.

"Well, I know that Rudeus is busy every day, gazing here and there and thinking about everything from what can be seen to what can't be seen."

Ariel looks at my eyes, playing with the topic.

Perhaps this is what she wanted to talk about?

"One thing I would like to ask Rudeus samawhat do you think about Luke?"

Luke.

What do I think about Luke?

So it's not about Orsted.

"Even if you ask me now."

Well, Ariel, what sort of answer are you hoping for?

"Rudeus-sama, your bad habit is showing."

"What?"

"Answer me honestly. I'm a master at the art of conversation. Such a skill is a staple for someone in my position "

Habit.

Do I have such a habit?

Although I feel that we've been talking and thinking about just such a thing these days.

About Orsted, about Hitogami.

That's not all.

My family also.

"I think that —— Luke is betraying us."

And suddenly, Ariel decisively said it.

Luke's betrayal.

Oh, that keyword.

"Although I haven't said it to Sylphy and the others."

I bet.

But, that's a little shocking.

".....I thought that Ariel-sama trusted Luke."

I was wondering about that, about Ariel's trust in Luke's loyalty.

Sylphy, just like Luke, will not betray Ariel.

The two attendants as well.

"I do."

"....."

"There is no reason for Luke to betray me. If he wanted to betray me, he would have done so a long time ago. Luke would have been

able to take my life during my sleep whenever he wanted."

"..... Then, why?"

"Even someone as loyal as Luke would betray me if he were forced into a situation where he had no choice but to do so. Like for example..... since he cares deeply about his family, maybe his family was taken hostage....."

Ariel said so quietly.

Family taken hostage.

I see.

If you're convinced, even without knowing about the existence of Hitogami, the words and actions of Luke can be explained.

Darius taking Luke's family hostage, and forcing him to betray Ariel.

On top of that, with Notus soldiers attacking Ariel, the promise was broken.

If you look at it that way, it all makes sense.

But Luke has remained eerily silent.

Does it appear to Ariel... that he's troubled about whether to return to Ariel's side or stay on Darius's side?

"That's why I want to hear your opinion. What do you think? I'm asking Rudeus-sama since he has recently offered his help to me. "

Also, it's possible that Ariel also suspected me.

Because of Luke, suspicion against me has grown.

By those words, she assumed that I'm teamed up with Luke.

"Is discussing a matter like this alright? In a place like this? I could turn out to be a traitor and take your life here and now, Ariel-sama. "

"It will be a shame if that were the case.... After all, it would mean that I lack the eyes to discern a person's true nature. I'll accept my death obediently."

Maybe I should test that courage?

No, that won't be good, it's not as if I got betrayed.

It's easy to enumerate the reasons that I will not betray her.

".....I don't think Luke is betraying you. It's just that he is being manipulated."

"By who?"

Her question is not easy to answer.

I wonder how would she respond if she hears Hitogami's name.

It's easier to just reveal the truth, but

Wait, looking at this conversation, perhaps Ariel is actually an apostle of Hitogami?

Although Orsted said that was impossible.....

Calm down.

The advantages and disadvantages of informing Ariel.

Let's consider them all.... first of all.

"Though I'm asking you that, it's probably difficult for Rudeus-sama to answer. If there was an easy answer, you'd have given it a long time ago."

Ariel's following words stopped my train of thoughts.

"So, could you introduce me?"

Ariel was laughing.

In the dark, I see a friendly smile.

"To the person that Rudeus-sama occasionally contacts..... Orsted-sama."

"What?"

That.

What do you mean.

This is getting complicated.

Did Orsted's name just come out?

Wasn't it about Luke?

Was this her real intention?

"It's not too much of a surprise, is it? After all, Rudeus-sama is the subordinate of Orsted-sama."

"....."

"Also, I would like to ascertain 『which side』 Orsted belongs to."

Is Orsted on Ariel's side? Or is he on Grabell's side? Is that what you mean?

Damn, I don't want to have such a roundabout conversation.

What happened to the Ariel-sama who's always easy to talk to?

"..... Even if you ascertain it, what do you intent to do about it?"

"If he is on 『this side』, then no matter how terrifying he is, I plan to endure it."

"Endure it, you say?"

"It is necessary for the royal family to get along with people even if they are unpleasant if it will be beneficial. Therefore, it will probably be okay."

I see, so thats how it is.

Though I wonder if it will be that simple with Orsted's curse.

"What if he belongs to『that side』?"

"Then I will bring him to my side."

Ariel said that brimming with confidence.

You are really amazing.

"He's nearby, isn't he..... ? Orsted-sama or someone who can contact him."

However, I have some reservations about this.

I'm not sure if this is something that I can decide at my discretion.

Even if Ariel intends to endure it, Orsted's curse is too strong.

He gets recognized as an enemy just by being looked at.

If she says she'll endure it, but then when she actually meets him, the result is that Ariel sees me as an enemy, it would be too painful to watch.

That said, if I refuse, refusing might seem like I'm declaring that I have something to feel guilty about.

At the very least, he isn't going to interfere with Ariel's path to the crown.

It's Hitogami that would like to disrupt Ariel's path, and we would like to interfere with Hitogami.

It will be difficult to explain.

Uh-huh.

"Don't worry about it."

A voice came from behind me.

Looking back quickly, he stood there.

A silver-haired, golden-eyed demon I mean Orsted.

"Ariel Anemoi Asura. If you wish to speak to me then I won't reject it."
"

Orsted's sharp glance silenced Ariel.

Facing his eyes as if she had received a shock, Ariel's leg trembled and she starts leaking.

"Oh Oh"

As if her nightmares had been materialized, her face distorts in fear.
With a reaction like that, I'll probably be labeled a traitor

"Aa"

As I was thinking that, Ariel's expression changed to one of ecstasy.
Looking like she was feeling good, I thought.
Seems like she's going to be fine.

Part 2

After a while, Ariel recovered.

Now, as if putting on airs, she's wearing a normal expression.

I washed her dirty pants and panties with water magic and dried them with my original magic 『Dry Steaming』, a melded magic of fire and wind.

In exchange for the rapid drying, the fabric gets damaged.

Aisha gets angry if I use it, thus it is designated as a forbidden technique in my home.

There's no choice, it can be said that this time is an emergency.

.....Even so, although I intended to live a relatively long life,

I never thought that there would come a day where I get to wash the princess's panties.

As expected of a princess, even her panties are made of this world's high quality silk.....

While I am washing her panties, Ariel is wearing my robe that I gave her.

Length is it limited to those long robes again.^[2]

Currently, Ariel is wearing the dried trousers and pants.

While wearing the robe that has touched the naked nether regions of a princess, I get excited over the sweet smell that floats in the air.

Maybe because I haven't done anything erotic in the past few days, my gauge has accumulated a bit.

I'll expend it later.

Since Eris and Sylphy are nearby, I'll hold back for now.

Orsted watches me suspiciously while I was busy thinking this.

"I apologize Orsted-sama, for I have shown you such an unsightly appearance."

"No, it's alright."

After things settled down, Ariel spoke to Orsted.

Her face is slightly pale, but it doesn't show her fear of Orsted.

"....."

"Please don't show such a scary face."

"It's my normal face."

"Oh, this must be the effect of the curse."

"That is right."

Even so, I wonder why Orsted came out.

Never mind that.

It is the boss's decision.

Now, your job is to watch the conversation between these two people.

"I see. Although I've met many Mikos and cursed children.... I can see that there is an exceptionally strong curse on you."

"However, you seem to be able to overcome that. "

"Being able to negotiate diplomatically under any circumstance is the forte of the Asura royal family."

"Though, deep down you don't trust me."

"Yes, therefore I hoped for the opportunity to be able to talk to you."

Conversation, such as mutual checks and balances.

Now, it's my turn to feel uncomfortable.

No, being a good audience is fine.

The sweet smell that's wafting from the robe makes me anxious and lose concentration.

"Let's go straight to the point. Orsted-sama, why do you lend me your support?"

"Because the person behind Darius is my enemy."

"Behind Darius.....is it my brother? The first prince Grabel?"

"It's someone else."

"Then, who could it be?"

Your question is hard to answer for now, even for the boss.....

"It's the Human God 『Hitogami』."

Oh, you said Hitogami's name.

I wonder what Orsted intends to do by revealing that much.

Although I think it's unnecessary, since Ariel won't become your enemy.

"When you say Human God, do you mean the one from the myths or one of the gods of creation?"

"That Human God and my enemy Hitogami are not necessarily the same, but that's what he calls himself."

"For what reason would such a God team up with Darius?"

"In order to kill you, and make Grabell the king."

"Haa"

Ariel had a face that was taken aback.

With that face, she slowly looks at me.

".....I see. Although it sounds unbelievable, it doesn't appear to be a lie now that I look at Rudeus-sama's face."

My face is being used as a lie detector.

Am I so easy to read?

Even though I was putting on my best poker face.

I'll consult with Sylphy about this.

What she thinks about my face.

..... I wonder if she will say that I'm handsome.

"But, why does such an exalted deity favor my brother.....? Is it because he is more suitable to be the king?"

"No, Hitogami operates for more selfish reasons."

".....May I hear more about those reasons?"

Orsted looks at me.

After making a slightly troubled face, he turned to face Ariel.

"In about 100 years, the Asura Kingdom will be exposed to danger."

"!"

"Whether you or Grabell becomes king will affect how the Asura Kingdom responds to that danger."

Hey, I've never heard this story before.

"If Grabell became king, it will try to resolve the crisis through military weaponry. If you became king, it will resolve the crisis through magic."

"When you say 100 years later, will we still be alive...?"

"The policies made by you two after you become king are different. Grabell will head down the path of weapon development and you will pour resources into military magic development."

Boss, why didn't you tell me this story?

"If you rely on military power, Asura Kingdom will fall. In the case of relying on magic, Asura Kingdom will survive. "

"....."

"Hitogami wants the Asura Kingdom to perish."

Perhaps, Orsted is lying?

And made up a story that is convenient for Ariel.

.....But, if Ariel tries to check the truth by looking at my face, won't the lie be exposed?

"Why does Hitogami want the Asura kingdom to perish..... ?"

"Because the person who will defeat him is born in the Asura Kingdom."

"Then those people are obstacles to him?"

"That's right."

Ariel looks convinced.

"Then, Orsted-sama needs that person?"

"That's right."

Ariel places her chin on her hand and strikes a thinking pose.

She peers at me with a somewhat troubled face.

Stop! Don't look at me!

Don't use the lie detector!

No, this poker face of mine will cover for Orsted.

"Well, I couldn't even fathom an answer like that, so I'm a little confused. I wonder if I can believe it

It seems she thinks it's lie.

Damn it.

"There is no need to believe me, though I'll tell you what you want to know."

"What I want to know, you said?"

While Orsted said that patronizingly, Ariel seemed surprised.

"Luke Notus Greyrat did not betray you. However, he is being manipulated by Hitogami."

From Ariel's face, her smile disappeared.

The smile that had been stuck as the default expression has disappeared.

"He is being manipulated?"

"He was told by Hitogami, [It's for Ariel's sake], and went down the wrong path."

"Luke is a wise man despite how he looks, do you think he'd be deceived that easily?"

"When people are given beneficial information by someone, they will trust that person easily."

Although Orsted has not given any beneficial information to me.

Well, that and believing it are different things.

"It's a sudden and unbelievable story, but..... Rudeus-sama, what do you think?"

I was suddenly shaken.

I think it's a good play.

Orsted is telling such crazy lies,

If I can't back those up with a satisfactory answer, then she will see through the lie on the spot.

However, to this question, I answered.

"I was manipulated by Hitogami for a long time. That guy appeared in my dreams and gave me advice many times which yield immediate results. Thanks to that, I obtained many things.

As for Hitogami, in the very end, it was all a strategic move to betray me at the last moment. I acted in accordance with the advice of that guy, and believed him. Then, I was betrayed. In the end, I was forced to fight Orsted-sama last time.

I believe that Luke's situation is similar."

As a matter of fact, I'm surprised at my own speech.

Listening to that, the smile on Ariel's face disappeared, and Ariel turns to face Orsted.

Her mouth is opening repeatedly, while she shook her head to and fro.

Once again, she looked up after she decided on what to say. I think.

"That means Luke is not on Darius's side right?"

"Yes, although he's been made to cooperate unwittingly,

Luke himself isn't conscious about it."

Putting aside everything else, what Ariel wanted to hear about the most was Luke.

From the authenticity of Orsted's words.....

".....I am relieved to hear that."

"Do you believe me?"

"If it were any other situation, I would not believe it. Though, there are things that made me convinced. Rudeus-sama ... frequently takes glances at Luke."

I was taking that many glances at him.....?

"Although everything feels too convenient You might be deceiving me, but I will try to believe it."

Ariel replied while looking towards me.

Orsted aside, I wonder if she's believing it because of me.

It's good news, but it's complicated.

"So, are there others that are Hitogami's apostles?"

"Darius is a candidate."

"That's probably for the best. Anyone else?"

"There is a high possibility that either the North Emperor Auber or the Water God Reida is an apostle."

"..... The apostles, there are only three?"

"Yes, no more than that."

"I see."

Ariel nodded.

"In other words, Rudeus-sama and Orsted-sama. The reason that you fight the apostles is so you can stop Hitogami's plans?"

"Yes. You learn fast."

"There's a reason why I take pride in being an understanding person."

Although Ariel says that proudly, she didn't smile.

Ever since earlier, her facial expression has been stiff.

"So, Orsted-sama. I have a proposal."

"What?"

"Since our purposes are aligned, I think I will also follow the instructions of Orsted-sama."

"..... Even if you have that intention, those around you won't listen."

"It's all well and good if the others don't know about this. Even if I sold my soul to the devil, it's impossible to complain if no one knew."

"....."

Ah, Orsted just looked a little down when she called him a devil.

"I will do anything to win. The stronger the allies, the better."

".....Didn't you consider the possibility that I lied and would betray you at the last moment?"

"I'm not stupid enough to miss a chance because of fear of risks."

Ariel-sama, what you're saying is cool but, you probably actually feel like you're swearing allegiance to the Great Devil King of Evil.

When I was also kneeling to Orsted, I had the same feeling.

However, the Orsted Corporation is a good company with great benefits.

Just because an evil-looking guy is the CEO, doesn't mean his treatment towards his employees is necessarily bad.

"For now though, Orsted-sama, I want you to leave Luke to me."

"Em."

"You should dedicate yourself to fighting against the apostles of Hitogami with Rudeus-sama, and I will focus my efforts on gaining the support of nobles and Luke. If we do this, the burden each person carries is also reduced so it's the most efficient thing to do "

".....I guess that's okay. Then I leave matters regarding Luke to you. Persuade him if possible, but if necessary, kill him."

"As you command."

Ariel knelt before Orsted, Orsted greeted it with a scary face as usual.

Part 3

Is this how it feels to be betwitched by a fox? ^[3]

Now that I think about it, Ariel has also become Orsted's subordinate.

And Orsted decided to reveal his future plans, in order to present a united front.

Him and Ariel.

"Rudeus-sama. Keep this matter a secret from Sylphy and the others."

"Yeah, more importantly, are you fine with this?"

"Yes. At last I felt refreshed. Oh, is it about that toilet matter?"

As she said that, Ariel had a refreshing face.

"Now I've finally established cooperation in the truest sense with Rudeus-sama."

"Right."

As for me, I still feel uneasy about some of this.

Still, I will obey Orsted for now and leave it be.

"Ariel-sama"

"What is it?"

"I should tell you now, in your attempt to persuade Luke, should he try to harm Eris or Sylphy, I will kill him. "

".....You're not following Orsted-sama's decision?"

"I'm only following Orsted-sama because that's the only way to protect my family."

I decide to warn her beforehand.

Of course, I don't know how it'll actually turn out.

Although I've confidently conveyed my resolve to kill Luke,

Let's believe in Ariel.

Rather than me trying to convince Luke one-on-one, Ariel might have a better chance of success.

"I understand, Rudeus-sama. Please take care of me in the future."

"Likewise."

Thus, Ariel became Orsted's subordinate.

She's become my colleague.

When we returned to camp with each other,

Sylphy puffed out her cheek, of course.

Notes

1. No Good

2. TLC?

3. Unsure: 狐につままれた気分、というのはこういう気分を言うのだろうか

Chapter 180 - Tristina

Part 1

The next day.

We entered the territory of the band of thieves.

There's no one tailing us.

There is also no sign of Auber, or any soldiers.

Regardless, it looks like the enemy hasn't considered the possibility of us taking an alternative route and just waited on the road ahead.

Usually, Hitogami would have foreseen such an outcome.

However, I'm wearing a crested armlet.

The crested armlet engraved by the Dragon God.

Thanks to it, the future is altered in a way that Hitogami couldn't see.

In other words, by taking a different route we will be outside of Hitogami's prediction.

Hopefully.

It may be possible to predict Hitogami's moves by memorizing the contents of the diary.

But from Orsted's tone, that's probably not a good idea.

I might inaccurately recall the diary's content as well.

While I'm in deep thought, the wind suddenly changed.

".... Stop!"

Ghyslaine who was walking slightly behind me grabbed my shoulder at the same time.

"I'll go first."

With Ghyslaine's short words, Eris appears before me.

I stopped her.

If Eris participates, any negotiation will end up with her fist on the other party's face.

Eris falls back quietly.

However, she was looking at me instead of forward.

"They are surrounding us We can break through now."

"Didn't you hear? I'm going to negotiate."

"..... I see, I'll protect the Princess."

With that, Ghyslaine moves back.

When I look behind me, Ghyslaine is speaking to Sylphy about something.

I catch Ariel's gaze.

Ariel gives me a [Take care] signal.

She's acting as if nothing happened yesterday.

She said to leave the matters regarding Luke and the other nobles to her.

Along the way, it appears that she was speaking to Luke, but the result is still unknown

Regardless, Orsted allowed Ariel to handle Luke's matter.

I just need to follow his word.

"....."

Under that assumption, I considered negotiation with the thieves first.

Taking the initiative to achieve victory.

Starting from self-introduction.

That's what my plan is, but I can't stop the party from showing themselves.

"..... Hmpf."

Right behind me, Eris is looking around.

Tracing her line of sight into the forest, a black shadow occasionally appears.

Today is this first time something like this happened.

No, since yesterday.

Immediately after the possible attack, her distance to me is surprisingly close.

Since Auber caught us by surprise yesterday, Eris is properly prepared now.

After a little while.

Eris stopped scanning the surroundings.

Apparently, we've been surrounded.

"There's about five people, at least. Be careful."

Eris tells us in a low voice.

When did you learn searching skills like that.

As I was thinking that, pushing his way through the bushes, a man showed up.

At the same time, from the shadow of the surroundings, from the top of the trees, figures appeared one after another.

One Five Ten

Hey, Eris-san, there are Twenty people.

Five people? That is bit too sloppy, you know?

The man in the front.

A bearded man wearing the best fur. Armed with machetes on the waist, holding an unlit torch in one hand. He appears to be the leader.

He looks like a bandit from every angle.

To be heard in this place, that person raised his voice.

"What's returned by the echo?"

Orsted informed me of the password.

"The rabbit's cellar isn't bright. "

The bandit's phrase means, [State your business?]

[Smuggling, we have some business with a member in the band of thieves.]

That was our reply.

For slave trades the answer would be, [Fox raises a child].

If you're searching for someone, [Your cat.]

If you wanted to assassinate someone crossing the Red Dragon's Beard, [Waking up the bear.]

It feels like it is subdivided. And wandering in without knowing this code, into their territory, they simply change jobs to highwaymen.

"Ah...?"

In response to my reply, Mr. Bandit made a quizzical look.

"Tina Thrush?"

"Striped Pattern Acorn "

It was the code for Tris.

Hearing that, the bandit makes a quizzical expression.

Then shrugged as if to say [Oh well], then raised one hand.

The shadows of the people surrounding us suddenly disappeared.

"Follow me."

The bandit told us that and ignited the torch.

When I gave the [Okay] signal to the back, I could see Ariel relax.

Before I turned around and continued, Eris was looking at me with wide eyes.

Somehow, she looked excited.

"As expected of Rudeus."

I'm wondering if that exchange just now is really that amazing.

Meh.

"Let's go"

"Okay!"

We followed the bandit into the forest.

Part 2

We were brought before a single hut built within the forest.

There was a stable outside, a storehouse and bedrooms inside.

Three bunk beds were lined up in the bedroom.

The damp sheets and blankets are likely infested with insects, but a bed is a bed.

Could this be the feeling of a lumberjack's hut?

Mr. Bandit.

I don't know his name since I didn't ask, but I gave him some money.

"I will bring Thrush here before dawn tomorrow. In the meantime, you can stay here...."

He reported that and left.

He'll head back to headquarters, and bring Tris for us.

No questions asked.

In this place, he doesn't pry into a customer's business.

Only if you pay a premium, though.

"Whew."

I set down our luggage for the time being, and explained in detail our plan for the future.

Such as crossing the border at dawn.

And asking for assistance from the woman who's coming here.

Tonight, we'll stay here.

"We can only pray that Darius doesn't catch wind of this before dawn."

Said Luke with a hint of sarcasm.

About that, I also want to pray.

It's only a gut feeling since everything is going too well, but I have a feeling that everything is going to turn bad at any moment.

Regardless, it's just a gut feeling after all.

"Having our dreams collapse and becoming playthings for the thieves, is it? Rudeus-sama. If that happens, please spare Kleene and Elmore okay? "

Ariel said jokingly.

Since she knew what's going to happen from now on, I guess.....

Oh, hey, Kleene and Elmore are glaring at me.

Please stop it, it was just a joke.

"It seems that for now I can sleep in a place with a roof tonight.....

Crossing the border tomorrow with a new route is going to be harsh, let's get some rest tonight."

At Ariel's words, everyone started to move.

Ariel's face is dark with the color of fatigue.

She is not accustomed to walking through the forest.

I thought it would be the same for the two servants, but they seem to be energetic.

The two are massaging Ariel's feet now.

It seems like the servants have been training for seven years just for this time.

Luke is beside the window looking out of the hut vigilantly.

Occasionally, he would send a sharp glance towards me.

Is he still suspecting me?

Maybe that fellow got tipped off by Hitogami, about who the enemies are.

Though, rather than Luke's, it would be Hitogami's enemies.

Regardless, it's been decided that Ariel will handle this matter.

Let's look forward to her skills for now.

Ghyslaine is standing in the corner, in a position overlooking the whole room.

As usual.

I gave her a glance, she returns with a nod.

Maybe, there is no meaning to this assent.

Sylphy went into the bedroom and started cleaning.

Although I'm okay with it, I wonder if we're going to sleep in that sheet and blanket.

No, I have brought spare cloth, so I'll just use the bed only.

Behind me, Eris is maintaining her sword.

Giving a satisfied smile as she polishes her sword.

With the sword giving off an eerie glow, Eris looks like a downright dangerous guy.

Well, it means she's reliable.

Although I wanted to get in touch with Orsted now.....

I'm not stupid enough to come out and say [I'm going out for a bit.]

For now, let's just check our equipment.

Part 3

Has it been two hours?

Outside, the rain has started to fall.

It is not a downpour like the rainy seasons of the Great Forest, but the sound of large droplets of rain hitting the ceiling of the cabin can be heard.

Ariel fell asleep.

Using the bed that was prepared by Sylphy, her sleeping breath is soon heard.

Elmore is also turning in, while Luke was stationed as gatekeeper at the front door.

Three people, Kleene, Eris, and Sylphy, are talking about something in a low voice.

From the way Kleene and Sylphy occasionally laugh, the subject is probably not serious.

Relaxing is important since they can't be on edge all the time.

Ghyslaine didn't move from her earlier position.

She isn't standing anymore, but sitting near the entrance, with her eyes closed.

I don't think she is sleeping.

There is no conversation.

I've finished inspecting my equipment, so I have some free time.

I should do something with this free time.

"...!"

As I was thinking that, Ghyslaine's ears twitched.

"Someone is coming."

In response, Eris rises.

Two people had their hand at their sword.

The room froze.

A little time after that, there was a knock at the door.

Loud pounding.

"....."

Ghyslaine winks at me.

I return with a nod, Ghyslaine opened the door.

Then a person came in, it was a woman covered with a hood.

She was dressed in rain gear made with demon leather.

Even covered with her rain gear it was apparent that she has a curvy figure.

"Geez.....open it quickly, stupid."

While cursing, the woman takes off her rain gear.

Light brown hair which isn't rare in Asura Kingdom.

Clothes that covered her huge chest which is rare in Asura Kingdom.

Great breasts.

I wonder if they're bigger than Eris?

"Then, who is the one that has business with me?"

Overlooking the room, the woman said in a loud voice.

"Please don't tell me it's something dumb like replacing a prostitute, now state your business quickly! I'm busy you know! "

A loud intimidating and frustrated voice is heard inside the whole cabin.

Eris frowned and Kleene sent a reproachful gaze.

Before she could say anything, Sylphy spoke first.

"I'm sorry, but there is someone sleeping in the back, so let's keep it down?"

"Huh?"

As soon as she heard that the woman's mood soured.

"Who would want to talk quietly after being called in this rain!? Are you trying to make fun of me!? Just so you know, this Tris is an 『Impatient Person』 "

This woman should be Tris.

Her impression is a little different from the diary.

I had expected her to be a more quiet person.

However, suddenly I feel annoyed.

She seems to have respected me a fair bit in the diary, but only because I stole the sacred writings from the Millis sect.

To the current me, I have nothing in common with Tris.

However, in regards to that problem, Orsted has already made arrangements.

"Ah, ah... Tch, What's with that. Don't screw me with.

I'm in a bad mood.

I lost at dice and Donovan let it get to his head!

I got spit on me from that woman who recently became a slave!

I got called during a rainy day and got sopping wet!

If you don't tell me your business, I'm returning, you know!

Because today's a bad day!

Next time I'm going to make it a day where I'm in a good mood!"

Except for the call, the rest of her complaints had nothing to do with us.

But, letting her vent her anger now is the first priority.

While I was trying to calm her down, Luke suddenly comes in from the front. He took Tris's hand, and wipes the water that was flowing on her forehead with a handkerchief.

"I apologize for calling you suddenly, Miss Tris. Please, calm down first. And could you give us some of your valuable time and listen to our story?"

Gesture and speech that was filled with affectation.

Tris got her hand taken, opening and closing her mouth.

She blushes instantly, but her eyes are downcast.

"Well, if you put it that way I will at least hear you out."

Super effective.

This is amazing..... Is this the power of popular guys?

"....."

Luke looked back, he sends a wink to me.

As if to say, [Now it's your turn.]

As Luke makes his exit, Tris immediately stops and greets him.

".....Oh before that, I haven't heard your name yet??"

".....It's Luke."

Luke doesn't say his family name. After stating his name, he moved to the back.

No hearing that name, I see Tris wearing a quizzical look.

It's a face says that she's heard that name from somewhere.

All right, now it's my turn.

"Nice to meet you, Tris-san"

I greet her with my best smile.

"Who are you?"

Then, Tris's quizzical face changed into an overly unpleasant face.

It's a look that's full of suspicion.

It looks like my smile isn't very effective.

From now on, I must practice my smile in my spare time.

So I can ask for favors Aisha is very adept at this.

Okay, I'll go with that.

"My name is Rudeus."

Lowering my head while saying so.

Tris raised her eyebrow, looking all over my body.

"Rudeus.....where have I heard that.....Oh."

In the middle of her thought, it seems she remembered something.

Both eyebrows went up, her look changed to one of surprise.

"『Quagmire』."

Muu, I'm more famous using that name?

"The worst and the cruelest magician in Sharia, why are you in a place like this.....?"

The worst and cruelest?

What kind of rumor has been spreading about me?

And, when I thought of that.

Click.

A sound rang.

When she heard the sound, Tris tightened her mouth.

I feel something itching around my back.

"....."

A [Click, Click] rhythmic sound is heard.

Looking at my field of view, Eris is the one that is making that sound. She is hitting her sword handle with her finger.

To issue a warning by the sound.

To show her irritation by the sound.

Like a rattlesnake, whose territory has been invaded.

When I hear that sound, chills run down my body for some reason.

From head to toe, I tremble in fear.

"Ah, my bad."

And, the one that's shivering is not just me.

Tris's small shoulders are also shaking a bit.

"I didn't mean to pry into your business."

Rather than a word with me, it was more like an excuse to Eris.

With one snort, Eris stopped tapping her sword handle.

What was that about?

"When you're in this business, information is everything. Knowing the name and appearance of a dangerous person."

"I'm not as dangerous as it sounds."

"Oh, that much is clear. We understand. Though the name Rudeus isn't that famous, 『Quagmire』 on the other hand is well known on the street. The woman over there is also known as 『Mad Sword King』. The Beast woman over there, isn't she 『Black Wolf』. Is that right?"

".....Well, that's right."

If she was by herself, those words might have been careless.

Even so, she knew about Eris.

Don't tell me that you're also Hitogami's Apostle?

..... No, that's unlikely.

While she knows the information about 『Quagmire』, she didn't know about my name Rudeus.

The information about 『Mad Sword King (Eris)』, 『Black Wolf (Ghyslaine)』, and 『Quagmire (Rudeus)』 is already widespread.

If I tried to tie everything to Hitogami, it's likely that I will make errors in my judgment.

"So, what does the infamous Rudeus want from Tris, a countryside bandit?"

Now, talking about the matter of her imprisonment.

Finally getting her help to [Overthrow the seed of evil, Darius.]

Though, if I suddenly open with such a topic, she will reject it immediately.

So, it is not like I can say [You're Tristina Purplehorse, a true Asura Noble.] and go straight to the point from there.

My opponent is one of the most powerful nobles in Asura.

If I talked about straight facts, I won't have a chance for victory.

Because of that, we have to take things one step at a time.

First of all, we have to get along first.

Then, during our travels, I will drop hints regarding the path to victory.

Then, when the time is right, I'll say something like [..... I wish to put an end to the noble that enslaved youI want to overthrow Darius.]

That will be my plan.

If she refuses after such a thought out plan, then I will have to employ more forceful methods.

All right.

"You, you're Lady Tristina Purplehorse, right?"

A voice was heard from behind me.

My plan was crushed.

Looking back slowly, a beautiful blonde stood there.

Ariel.

She just got up, so her hair is more frayed than usual.

But, her voice is as charismatic as always.

Looking at her, Tris's eyes was wide open.

"W, Why do you know that name..... "

"Well, it's Tristina after all..... Hey, have you forgotten? Didn't we meet at my five-year-old birthday?"

While I wondering about what I should do, Ariel took the initiative from me.

I sent her a wink.

And entrust it to her.

"Oh..... Ariel-sama.....!?"

Facing her, Tris is looking at Ariel with a look of surprise.

Perhaps she was checking her memory, looking at Ariel intently,

Thinking if she looked familiar, her surprised expression remained.

"W, why is Ariel-sama At a place like this...?"

While her legs are trembling, Tris immediately kneels down in place.

I move away and Ariel stood in front of her.

"I came back in response to the information that father was sick, but ... apparently my brother didn't welcome my return very much."

While smiling in self-ridicule, Ariel replied.

I wonder if it's alright to say things like that.

While guys like me are hard to believe ... but.

Being truthful will often gain another's trust.

"Oh, I see. ... So in an attempt to cross the border safely, you're making contact with us."

Tris nodded as she felt convinced.

Maybe she heard about the information about our ambush in the forest.

"Why is Tristina in a place like thisI had heard that you were missing? "

"That was"

At that question, Tris was troubled.

But she resolved herself, and opened her mouth.

"To tell you the truth ——"

Part 4

After that, the story advanced by leaps and bounds.

I am not needed after all.

As if in confession, Tris revealed most of her life up to that point to Ariel.

Kidnapped at an early age,

she lived as Darius's sex slave,

then sold to bandits,

and then lived as the thieves boss's woman for a while.

She began training as a thief at the whim of the boss.

Became a free woman when the boss changed, and that leads to now.

There were some colorful passages in her story, but Tris without laughing nor crying finished her story indifferently.

Ariel shed her tears at the tragedy of Tris's life.

They were sincere tears from her heart.

Ariel promised in tears, [Although I may not understand your suffering, I will bestow upon the one that made your life hell a befitting punishment.]

And she then asks Tris, [I want you to testify against Darius about being his sex slave.]

What a convincing performance.

Tris did not understand immediately.

The Asura Kingdom is powerful, and Darius is a cunning man, which is why Ariel's victory is not guaranteed.

In contrast, Ariel thought otherwise.

She is convinced that by using Perugius's name, Sylphy, Eris, Ghyslaine, and I, she would be able to topple Darius, and take the throne.

Tris was at a loss.

She needed time to think, one hour.

After a long silence, in the end, she nodded her head.

Then she swore to God that she will send Ariel to the capital safely, and help us get revenge against Darius.

Tris became Ariel's companion.

I did not do anything.

Skilfully weaving her words, Ariel made Tris into her companion beautifully.

Of course, it was Orsted who during our meeting suggested bringing Tris to our side.

But in that retrospect, it wasn't discussed in detail.

My roundabout plan turned out to be completely unnecessary.

Should I say as expected of Ariel?

True to her word, she dealt with the noble on her own.

Well then, I should also concentrate on my work.

From tomorrow, the journey begins.

Chapter 181 - Along the Way

Part 1

Next morning.

After finishing preparations, we left the hut.

The morning sun has yet to rise.

The forest looks dark, quiet, and thin.

"Well then, follow me."

With Tris leading us, we proceed deeper into the forest.

As the sun is not out yet, it was hard to tell where we were headed.

Looking at the inclined ground, it seems we are moving towards the mountain.

Without any chatter from anyone, we moved quietly.

I think we're already pretty deep in the forest, too deep to be followed.

But after emerging from some bushes.....

"Ooo....."

The forest abruptly opened up in front of us.

There is a large lake in the middle of the forest.

I can say that it's more like a swamp, but it's still a lake.

The half-moon shaped lake, flanked by a tall cliff and the tall forest behind us, had a clear blue color.

There is no waterfall nor river.

I wonder if it's fed from spring water.

"This area isn't charted on the map yet."

"This is a position that can't be seen from far away, you guys wouldn't have managed to come here without our map."

"Hee."

Tris said as she explained this to us.

We walk along the lake shore, heading towards the cliff.

When we reached the vicinity of the cliff, Tris casted some sort of spell towards the stone tablet.

Then, part of the cliff that was facing the lake disappeared, revealing a cave.

"Over here. Be careful, the floor is slippery."

Under the cliff, Tris stepped into the lake while walking on its edges.

The part of the water near the cliff seems to be shallow.

The water is about knee deep.

"Rudeus! Let's hurry!"

Eris is looking at that scene with her eyes sparkling brightly.

It seems she wants to go into the cave quickly.

Even though she's already 20 years old, this part of her didn't change at all from the old days.

Well, as a matter of fact, I'd also like to go into that small cave.

"It's okay if you hurry along, but don't let your horse slip and drop you into the water."

"I know."

Eris makes a face like she doesn't understand, and forcefully pulls the horse Matsukaze into the lake.

Matsukaze doesn't seem to want to enter the lake, but tugged by

Eris, he gets pulled into the water.

She's almost like a Kappa...

Eris seems like she'd be good at sumo.

Does she like cucumbers?

I haven't seen her be picky about things often.

"Rudi, we're next"

"Ah"

Prompted by Sylphy, starting with Eris, we form the horses into a line.

The water is cold.

If it's already this cold now, what about during winter?

I wonder if the horses will die in such a low temperature.

No, since the lake freezes in winter, you might be able to move more easily.

I mean, it was raining yesterday, so it's possible that the volume of water increased.

The water probably only reaches the calf normally.

The entrance to the cave goes uphill, so we got out of the water immediately.

"Stay behind me, the road is very messy and disorienting."^[1]

Tris, leading with a torch, went through the dim cave.

Just in case, I also summoned the spirit of the lamplight.

Looking back, I see Ariel looking rather troubled by her wet pants.

"Ariel-sama, if you wish I'll dry it for you later."

"Yes, I understand."

Ariel, with a troubled face, forces a sweet smile.

"....."

Looking back on yesterday, the fact that Tris became an acquaintance of Ariel so quickly could only be explained by good fortune.

Ariel's charisma was effective as usual, even if the two had met by chance.

Because of that, there was a feeling of [As expected of Ariel-sama.] that spread throughout the cabin.

As for Eris, she seemed annoyed for some reason

Eris's cranky mood aside.

Ariel seems to support me earnestly.

".....Rudi."

When Ariel and I looked at each other, Sylphy's voice comes from my side.

"What is it Sylphy, my lovely wife?"

"Don't stare at Ariel-sama too much, or I'll pull your ear."

"I understand. I guess I can only stare at Sylphy."

My ear was pulled.

It's no good even though Sylphy gets along with Ariel.

If it was Eris or Roxy then it would have been alright, but Ariel is no good for some reason.

....Let's just say the situation is similar to that with Nanahoshi.

Looks like she thinks I might cheat again.

In retaliation, I licked her ear from behind.

Part 2

The cave floor was beautifully tiled.

It appears man-made.

"It will turn into a complicated maze up ahead, so please do not get lost.

Magic beasts do not appear often, but be careful as sometimes they may come from behind.

If you see a light in the distance, absolutely don't go towards it.

That's because the territory outside belongs to the Red Dragons."

We move on after listening to Tris's various warnings.

The cave has a ceiling that is very wide and high.

Tris says it has tortuous paths, with many branching roads.

However, it's not a labyrinth, just a man-made tunnel.

"Somehow, it's incredible."

Sylphy said suddenly.

"Rudi, is this not a labyrinth?"

"What? Oh, yeah. This is not a labyrinth."

"Such a big tunnel, how was it made....do you know?"

Asked by Sylphy, I was puzzled.

"Well.....from what I heard, the Red Dragons began to live in this mountain around 400 years ago. Looking at the remnants it looks like the ones that lived here before the Red Dragons were the Dwarf race."

"Oh, is that so this tunnel is quite old then."

Sylphy and I walk in the cave while holding a conversation between us.

In the front, Eris is looking curiously down a strange passage, before getting pulled forward by Ghyslaine.

Just for the worst case, we stayed overnight in a place with roof, mind might loosen a little.

"Come to think of it, Rudi....."

"What?"

".....No, it's nothing."

After Sylphy said that, she glanced back.

While slightly apart, Ariel is right behind us.

.....The party must not fall into disorder.

I guess it's better not to widen the distance from each other so much.

Demons seem to be few and far in between, but getting lost in this place is definitely no laughing matter.

Part 3

We passed through the cave.

Looking at the position of the sun, it's just barely around noon.

Counting from the time we departed, about 8 hours have passed.

Like the entrance, the exit is also hidden by magic.

Speaking of which, we're still in the middle of a forest.

Tris says, the time for smuggling into the border is from morning to evening.

And from the evening to middle of the night, it's for smuggling out of the border.

This way the smugglers won't get in each other's way.

We were made to wait in that hut due to the timing.

"Yes, we have now reached Asura Kingdom."

Our current position should be southeast of the border.

If you head south of here, you'll hit the Donati territory.

If you head southeast, you'll hit the Fedoa territory.

"Ariel-sama, you have crossed the border, congratulations!"

"EeeThank you."

Tris said so as a joke, but Ariel was exhausted.

Even compared to Luke and the other attendants, Ariel's physical strength seems low.

Well, Ariel had reigned as a charismatic figure in the magic university.

Even if she can't train her magic and perform physical exercises, she should do things such as jogging.

Even in everyday life, stamina is important.

Despite her muscle pain, she could move around.

It would be solely thanks to the healing magic.

Healing magic works well with muscle pain, back pain, and also stiff necks.

However, it can't alleviate fatigue.

We continue while taking a break several times, and aimed to exit the forest.

Part 4

The journey from there went smoothly.

Tris knows all the back roads in Asura Kingdom.

Even though they're the back roads, they weren't any harder to traverse on.

Also, other than the highway connecting the city and town, the back roads exists as an alternative route for convenient use.

The princess's carriage, traveling on dirt roads normally reserved for village handcarts, unfortunately draws a lot of attention..

While we moved quickly, though we expected it, Auber's attack never came.

.....Though it can also be attributed to the routes Tris chose, but there's no way to know if Hitogami had already known about these routes.

I guess the enemy is concentrating its forces near the Royal Palace or Imperial City instead.

Well whether it's Darius's judgment or Hitogami's judgment, it was a mistake on their part.

Part 5

Along the way, we pass near the Fedoa territory.

A few years have passed since the beginning of the reconstruction, wheat fields are visible here and there.

The people have also become more and more lively.

But the golden sea of wheat from our memory was absent.

It would need another ten years for that to be regained.

Sylphy and Eris, with their horses in a row, are watching the wheat fields and grassland spreading before them.

The face of the two contrasted each other.

Sylphy has a nostalgic face.

Eris has a grumpy face.

"There are more fields now than when we came before."

"Really? I don't remember."

"The reconstruction is going well."

".....Hmph, it doesn't matter."

Eris turns away with a frown.

"Don't say that you don't care about this. After all, it's our hometown. Even knowing about that, you still didn't want to come back Eris? "

"No. I was hated."

"Come to think of it, I was also hated....."

Saying that, Sylphy's eyes narrowed down in nostalgia.

How nostalgic.

Both of them were born here, but into vastly different situations.

Bullied, Sylphy could only coop up like a turtle.

Eris was bludgeoning her opponents before bullying them.

If these two met at the same time, things would have just gone wrong.

..... No, that's no good.

The scene of Eris bullying the crying Sylphy floats before my eyes.

Somewhat different from the present Eris, the past Eris seems more fierce.

If Sylphy was hanging out with Eris, it would be a day-to-day hell for Sylphy.

It's day-to-day, such as Nob○ta was beaten by Gi○nt every day. ^[2]

It might also have iron fist made Su ○ oni, if Sylphy now.

"Sylphy. Just so you know."

"What, Eris"

"Even if I remained here, there is nothing I can do anyway."

".....?"

Sylphy tilted her head.

It was lovely like a squirrel.

"Oh, that's right. Eris was the Daughter of the Lord of this area. I've forgotten about it."

"Hmph, just a figurehead anyway."

"But, I think Eris would be more uncomfortable with such a life style?"

"..... Right."

Eris's mood has improved.

The wonder of simplicity.

"On top of that, I don't necessarily want to be a lord. There are people who deemed me unfitting for that role anyways."

"I guess Eris is more suited towards swinging the sword."

"Right?"

Eris's chat with Sylphy does not stop.

"But, if things happened differently, there's a possibility that Eris would have become a noble of the Asura Kingdom."

"There isn't."

"And I feel that Rudi would have married Eris, and helped her from the shadows. And with Rudi's help, Eris would become the Head of Boreas in no time."

Sylphiette, that delusion is an overestimation.

"So, Rudi abandons me, approaches Ariel-sama. The House of

Boreas becomes Ariel's faction, Rudi's and Eris's companion, and as a result of that they wage a battle against Darius and Grabell."

I disagree.

If that were the case, did Sylphy intend to abandon me?

If that were the case, Sylphy and I wouldn't meet again.

Well, it is just a delusion, but it's quite good.

"What else would be different?"

"Eris is the head of the Boreas house, Rudi is the lieutenant. I think you would be a match..."

"I'm only good at swinging the sword every day and making babies with Rudeus."

Eris said so frankly.

Even though I was listening, I felt embarrassed.

Sexual harassment.

"Sylphy, are you not satisfied with just that?"

"Honestly, I'm satisfied. After marrying Rudi, I was allowed to have a fulfilling life."

"....."

"Soon after marriage, Rudi and I were also like monkeys in heat. Rudi carried me into the bedroom with an erotic face when we were home alone. As for me, my heart would beat quickly thinking [I wonder if Rudeus will make me his today too] and...Ah, this isn't something to talk about during daytime, is it."

Oh, that's right, we should probably stop.

Starting from a while ago, Eris was watching jealously and stealing glances at me.

I'll probably be kidnapped into a bush by someone with an amazing naughty face tonight.

Although I welcome it, I'm worried.

There is no time for such things right now.

"Although I'm fine with things as they are now, I might become paranoid about the possibility of another wife."

"..... I also wonder about the possibility of having children."

"Huh, the child of Eris and Rudeus will most likely become naughty kids."

"What you mean by that"

If they inherited my genes, they're going to be a lustful guy without exception.

If its like that, I'm worried about Lucy's future.

Even if Sylphy isn't too lewd, her grandmother is Elinalise after all.

Those tendencies might become worse by mixing with my genes, my child could grow up into a man eater of innocent, honest boys.

All right, this requires moral education, and continued vigilance of her growth as closely and as early as possible.

"I want a child soon."

"You will be able to soon. Eris is from the human race, so your affinity with Rudi is better than mine."

Why would Sylphiette-san say something so self-depreciating?

The affinity between our bodies is outstanding.

Even now my inner beast is on alert and it'll be ready to make a second child with Sylphy.

"Though, instead of a child, right now it's more important to protect Rudeus."

"That's right."

The conversation lasted since then.

It's a silly story.

When we get back home, Sylphy is going to teach Eris cooking, what Roxy would be doing by now, such as making delicious rice from the Fedoa territory, without content, a suitable story.

Eris and Sylphy got along well, though Eris might be feeling a bit reserved, the conversation became light hearted.^[3]

Though, listening to their conversation soothed me, I embraced Sylphy from behind.

In such a state, even if I think there might be an attack, I'm able to sleep soundly.

Part 6

After travelling for about ten days, we arrived at a town called Rickett.

It's a great town that connects the end of the Donati territory to the Asura capital.

The flow of traffic stretched from northern to central Asura.

Though, there are more merchants traveling northward than southward.

Therefore, people such as village chiefs from the Donati territory are attracted here.

Selling their crops into the south, as well as buying crops from other regions.

It feels like an important trade hub in the Asura Kingdom.

Saying that, I wonder how important this place is to Asura Kingdom.

Trading towns such as this are larger than the Magic City Sharia.

Normally, we try to stay hidden on the way to the capital.

We collect information from each village, but always hiding our

tracks from our pursuer.

In a city as large as this though, hiding places and places where we can be attacked are both hard to come by.

Rather, its the opposite, this is a good place to hide.

Although I think that, unfortunately we stand out from the crowd.

It's a given for Ariel, but Ghyslaine, Eris, and Sylphy also stand out.

Their appearances as individuals are too unique.

Also, Luke is a celebrity in the Asura Kingdom.

Unfortunately, it's impossible to avoid this town.

Though Tris is familiar with the roads, she can't make new ones.

Furthermore, one of the roads, we use to connect somewhere and somewhere.

And, I tried a poetic expression, but not of what it is.^[4]

Basically all roads from the capital city to the Donati territory pass by this town at some point.

This town being such a convenient choke point, the possibility to get ambushed here is high.

It's the next checkpoint after crossing the border.

And, although I thought that.

We didn't get stopped by guards at the entrance to the town, and there were no soldiers in armor setting up roadblocks inside the town either.

Guided by Tris, we're moving to her recommended hotel.

It's an ordinary inn at first glance, but it's an inn that consists of only gangsters and those who were in organizations similar to Tris.

The buildings that surround the inn are all properties of the organization, and in an emergency, we can also escape using an

underground passage.

It's just like a Ninja House.

Ariel stays inside the inn and Tris went out to gather information.

The rest of us act as Ariel's guards.

Part 7

Currently, Ghyslaine and I are near the stairs on the first floor.

Sylphy and Eris are near Ariel's room on the second floor.

We are all guarding our respective locations.

In the room with Ariel are Luke and the two attendants in disguise.

Though I think it's unlikely, I hope that Luke doesn't go berserk and stab Ariel.

Even if he did go mad, it will give me a reason to knock him down....

Even so.

Then, I saw Ghyslaine.

"....."

Standing to the side of the stairs, she was looking towards the entrance while her ears stood up.

Recently, I'm not having many conversations with Ghyslaine.

She is engaged in the role of escort more seriously than I am.

I tried to make conversations.

But she said it interferes with her hearing and stops the conversation.

Maybe she hates me?

Such a feeling even sprouts.

But she doesn't even hold conversations with Eris, always diligent.

"Rudeus."

This time, she suddenly spoke to me.

"Yes, what is it"

"I was saved the other day."

..... The other day, when?

"When I was blinded by Wii Taa."

Oh, that fight in the forest.

"No need to thank me, supporting you is the role of the rear guard"

"Your quick wittedness remind me of the old days."

When she says old days... that would be ten years ago.

Comparing to back then, I've changed quite a lot about myself.

Though in the eyes of Ghyslaine, I did not appear different.

"Your quick wit will get you into trouble one day. When that happens, rely on Eris-ojousama."

Oh.

That's what Ghyslaine is talking about.

The fact that I always try to do everything myself.

"Eris-ojousama worked hard for that."

"..... Right."

I wonder why.

I want Sylphy and Roxy to sit tight at home.

But I don't think the same about Eris for some reason.

As you say, Ghyslaine, it's probably because Eris has been working hard for that.

That effort is showing its results.

An image of Eris that stays still at home never crosses my mind.

I mean, Eris says she wants children, but I wonder if she is going to sit still.

..... I'm worried.

"....."

Afterwards, the conversation dropped.

What should I do?

I wonder what I should talk about.

Old things, uh, uh.

"Incidentally, Ghyslaine do you still practice your reading and writing?"

"Oh sorry, after I learned it, I've never practiced again. Now I have forgotten most of it. Sorry, despite all of your hard work. "

What a great attitude.

I want Eris, who also didn't remember most of it, to emulate that.

"The guys from the Holy Land of the Sword didn't believe that I was able to write letters."

"But it should've been easy to prove?"

".... No, because most of the guys can't read or write either, so they think it's just scribbles."

"Haha."

I want to see that sight a little.

"What about you? Are you still practicing the sword?"

"A little. When I have time, it's part of my exercise routine, practice swings."

"I thought because you're a magician you've stopped training them."

"Even for a magician, muscles are necessary. Right?"

I am not aiming for the top in sword skills.

Paul who also had that goal, is gone.

Though I was able to teach a little swordplay to Norn.

But, in this world of swordplay, not being able to wear touki is deadly.

"Do you remember the promise of the old days, Rudeus?"

"Promise of the old days?"

"Did you forget? About making a doll of me."

Oh, come to think of it there was such a promise.

One made on my 10-year-old birthday.

How nostalgic.

"I heard from someone that you're still making dolls. When you have time, make one of me again."

"Yeah, of course"

"I do not know much about art, but I like the dolls you make."

Those were some moving words just now

Why do the people of this world like this kind of talk before battle.

Although somehow I became anxious.

It's not a death flag.

No, it can be seen.

It's the opposite.

Since I've retained the knowledge of my past life, to speak like that before a decisive battle would be considered a death flag.

However this is different.

You have to gather each and every reason that gives you a reason to survive, and when push come to shove those reasons can decide life or death.

"Nn."

Then, Ghyslaine twitches her nose and ears.

As I tighten the grip on my staff, becoming alert, Ghyslaine waves me down.

"No, it's all right."

A person walked through the door of the inn, it was Tris.

Holding a bag in each hand, she closes the door with her foot.

As she walks steadily towards us, she holds out one of the bags.

"Good work. Here, have some rations."

"Thank you very much."

"Be grateful to Tris-neesan as you accept this."

Inside the bag are pear-like fruits.

She took one, and tossed it to Ghyslaine, who began to eat it without peeling off the skin.

"Well, good luck."

While waving her hands, Tris went up to the second floor of the inn.

I think in the past ten days, she has fit in quite well.

Personality-wise she's similar to the two attendants.

A fellow Ariel believer.

A little cheeky, but not a bad person.

Though her dress is quite revealing, I'm troubled about where to look.

In terms of how revealing it is, Ghyslaine's clothes are comparable, but in Ghyslaine's case it's the style of a warrior.

Muscle is an art.

"Tris's mood is good today."

"That's true, I wonder if something happened."

While talking, I also picked up a pear.

I peeled off the skin with a knife and took a bite.

It tastes crunchy, but less sweet, and sour.

The fruits of this world aren't always suitable to be eaten.

Well, it's not that bad.

"She might have gotten some good information. Gisu is like that too, in times like these, his mood would improve tremendously."

"I see."

Ariel constantly made Tris collect information about one thing or another.

From the location of Darius's private army, Auber and everything else.

She reports everything that has caught her eyes to Ariel.

After organizing such an enormous amount of information and sifting through them, she comes to me for consultation.

I mean, there is a possibility that I've also missed important information... but.

There's probably no other option than to give up for that matter.

Because I'm not talented enough to control everything.

"Come to think of it, Gisu had said that he's going to Asura Kingdom. Possibly, we might meet up somewhere "

"If he's here, he'll be the one to find us."

True.

Gisu is that type of guy.

He discovers you, but he doesn't make contact then and there, he instead takes action to set up a passionate reunion.

He's probably trying to produce an exciting reunion.

"A guy like him. Being bad at gambling, he would have left to another country anyway."

"Gisu is bad at gambling?"

"He is only good when there is no money."

This was a story I heard from Roxy, though.

Asura Kingdom seems to be a country where an adventurer can't easily live.

In addition to the small number of demons,

Knights are sent to rural places,

Court magicians and Knights are sent to do monster hunts on a regular basis which also serve as training and exercise.

Hence, the number of monster subjugation requests is next to nothing.

Because the major guilds have something like collection teams, there are no gathering and harvesting quests.

Guards are not requested since the danger zone is small, so it's a relatively safe place in many cases.

Speaking of quests that are available, there are time-consuming tasks such as plain delivery quests or search quests.

Though there seems to be something like farm helpers that are needed now and then.

Anyway, the work for adventurers is almost nothing compared to other countries.

This trend increases as you move closer to the Imperial City, the capital Ars,

Even if there is a small number of young adventurers going to the local territory Donati and Fedoa territory to increase their rank, when their rank goes high enough they would move to the north or south.

If you are strong or educated, I hear you will be employed as bouncers and tutors, but jobs like that are only a handful, since in the first place there is no need to be an adventurer.

In short, because Asura Kingdom already has many specialists for various tasks, there aren't many jobs available for adventurers.

Mysterious meat-heads are not needed here.

The Holy Kingdom of Milis also have an Adventurer's Guild, but the story is similar there.

"....Hn?"

Ghyslaine voiced, whilst twitching her ears.

Her expression is a little tense, maybe an actual enemy is coming this time.

I hurriedly throw away the core of the pear, grip my staff, and stare at the entrance.

However, Ghyslaine's gaze isn't at the door entrance.

It's at the top of the stairs.

My ears hear the voice of someone arguing from the top of the stairs.

What?

"For now, I will take a look."

"Okay."

If you go up the stairs, you can see Eris and Sylphy are watching the door with an anxious look.

Did something happen?

"Sylphy."

"Oh, Rudi. A while ago, after Tris-san came back, for some reason Luke and Ariel-sama started arguing."

"....."

Luke and Ariel fighting?

Hey hey, even though she said things like [Entrust Luke to me]...

No, maybe fights are important to have every once in a while?

"Excuse me, it's Rudeus. I'm entering."

Just in case, after I knock once, I enter the room without waiting for a reply.

There, Luke stood with a pale face,

Sitting on a chair, was Ariel with a straight face.

And, there was Tris with a troubled face.

"Rudeus-sama, you've come at a good time."

Looking at me, Ariel's face remained calm as she said that.

"Did something happen?"

"Yes. Tris brought some information."

Tris who brought that information had a troubled face.

"What information?"

".....Information regarding Sauros Boreas Greyrat."

Sauros.

So, it's concerning the promise with Ghyslaine.

Did she make Tris look into it?

"Events in the Asura Royal Palace, rather than in the capital, the people from this region are more knowledgeable about that. If you know things you're not supposed to in the capital, the royalties will have you silenced."

I guess it's something like that.

"I see. And the person who arrested Sauros-sama, who is the main culprit?"

"Main culprit you say? "

"....."

Luke's face is scary.

Ariel wears a Noh mask.

It is a face with no emotion.

"Again, that person was from our faction. Moreover, that person has had a personal grudge against Sauros-sama"

Ariel said without putting on airs.

"It's Philemon Notus Greyrat."

Philemon killed Sauros.

Well it would be likely.

The Notus house was the largest noble house in Ariel's faction.

The Boreas house sits opposite of the Grabell faction.

They're enemies.

On top of that, Philemon personally hated Sauros.

There is no reason not to act given the chance.

I guess that's to be expected.

Whatever you say about Sauros, he was still a lord at that time.

Even if he lost his territory, he had the protection of the first prince's faction, he wouldn't have been able to lose his standing if the person responsible wasn't a noble with the same level of power as him.

"...So, what do you intend to do Ariel-sama?"

"As promised, I will leave him to Ghyslaine"

Luke chewed his lips.

Well, someone is angry about it.

Ariel knew how much Luke values his House.

In this case, prioritizing Ghyslaine over Luke.

"Ultimately, Philemon-sama... and whether the Notus house has really betrayed us. I still can't confirm the credibility of this information."

""

"Supposing that we've been betrayed, then I will execute Philemon. Then I will appoint Luke as the head of the Notus family at that time "

"If you have not been betrayed? "

"I will persuade Ghyslaine and we will settle for another person's head."

" Who is that other person? "

Ah, I see, even if Philemon is the main culprit, she still has uses for him.

Keep her tools alive, kill others.

Selfish, but it can't be helped.

I am no saint either, I can't afford to care for people outside of my circle.

"Luke, that's alright with you, right?"

"...Whether it's betrayal or murder, there isn't a shred of evidence."

Luke had a sour face.

I understood at the beginning, but now it's a face that I can't read.

He's not giving much of a reaction even when he hears that his parents are going to be killed.

"Someone might be trying to lure us into a trap..."

Saying that, he looked at me for an instant.

"Luke, rest assured. As I said before, Rudeus-sama will not take over the house of Notus."

"Ariel-sama, talking about that in front of Rudeus is...!"

"No, exactly because he's in front of us, I need to be clear about it."

Said Ariel while inhaling a big breath, as if to make a declaration.

"No matter what achievements he accumulates during this fight, I have absolutely no intention of granting nobility to Rudeus-sama."

I have no intention of accepting it either.

I've never thought of such a thing.

""

But Luke's face when he heard this.

He made a face as though I've become a mortal enemy to him.

Part 8

The next day, there was a report from Ariel.

Thanks to the fight yesterday, Luke finally confessed.

As it turns out, Luke had indeed received advice from Hitogami.

As for the advice, Luke received just one.

The timing was while preparing for the trip.

What he heard is basically『Beware of Rudeus's betrayal.』

Hitogami said:

Desiring to be a lord of the Notus House, Rudeus will defect to Darius's side.

The purpose is status, money and Ariel's body.

Without being discovered by Sylphy, I acted behind the scenes.

Pretended to be Ariel's ally and led her into traps by the day.

Passed information to Darius by the night.

All of it has been secretly planned by me from several years ago.

Marrying Sylphy is also a part of my plan.

That Rudeus sure is talented.

So talented that I wanted to trade places with him.

If I can be so cold blooded, my life would be much easier.

At first Luke thought, [There's no way Rudeus has interest in social status] and didn't believe it.

I didn't think that he had so much confidence in me, but I suppose that matched my usual behavior.

However, with the transfer magic circles' destruction recently, then the betrayal of the Notus House, Hitogami's prophecy began to hit the mark.

With these things happening, Luke's trust in me began to wane little by little.

So he readily believed in Hitogami, and came to look at me suspiciously.

By the way, It seems that even now, he still doubts me. Ariel ordered him to prove his doubts with action.

Ariel had to say it with confidence in order keep Luke from trying

anything in the future.

Well, if the degree of advice Luke had received was just that, we could probably take it easy for the time being.

In fact, I've never even seen Darius's face,

I'm not interested in Paul's former home,

And it's not like I need Ariel's body, either.

No matter how much Luke is suspecting me, it's all a baseless lie anyway.

It's lousy advice from Hitogami.

I understand very well, that guy didn't expect anything from Luke.

Anyway, even in such a lousy story, it would not be polite if I suspected him.

With things like the right man in the right place, you're still important.

Part 9

I went out to town the next day.

Luke was standing around acting hostile towards me, and acted in a way to separate me from Ariel as much as possible.

Since Ariel declared that I won't be made a noble, he probably thinks that I will kill Ariel and deliver her neck to Grabell.

However, being separated wasn't that bad.

Knowing Luke's way of thinking, his actions are limited.

Now the number of things to be concerned about in this journey have decreased by one.

I don't know if she anticipated all this, but Ariel's ability should be praised with [As expected of Ariel].

Oh yeah, as for avenging Sauros, Ariel told everything directly to

Eris and Ghyslaine.

"And that's why, the one who took down Sauros-sama may be someone from my faction."

"Is that so?"

"Fuun."

Eris wasn't interested even a bit, but Ghyslaine's eyes were filled with murderous intent.

But, that doesn't mean Eris didn't take interest at all in the conversation, I understood that when I saw her hand gripping the sword on her waist.

Her finger lost color and turned white, she is trying to restrain herself.

"Ghyslaine, do you wish to kill me?"

".....No, I will kill the enemy that you've prepared for me."

Ghyslaine seems to be obsessed with killing Philemon.

I wonder if she can be persuaded, but this was Ghyslaine's aim all along.

Eris was silent.

But, nodded so as to follow Ghyslaine's words.

"Well, I will also kill the enemy that's trying to attack Rudeus."

Eris is as usual.

After that, all that remains is the capital.

It should take about 20 days.

While taking several detours, we headed to Asura Kingdom's capital.

We arrived at the Imperial City Ars.

Notes

1. TLC
2. Doraemon reference
3. TLC
4. TLC

Chapter 182 - Imperial City Ars

Part 1

The Imperial City Ars.

The world's largest capital.

The city was named after the hero who led the Human race to victory in the Magic War.

A city that takes your breath away.

High up on the top of a hill sits a majestic castle, the Silver Palace.

Surrounding the castle are the huge mansions belonging to the higher nobles.

Boulevards extend out of the surrounding city wall.

A huge coliseum.

A gorgeous training ground for knights.

Beautiful temples for the Saint Milis religion.

An aqueduct system that spread throughout the city.

Headquarters to the world's largest trading companies.

Dojo and headquarters of the Water God style.

A packed opera theater district.

A Tavern district filled with decorations and the scent of beautiful women.

A Gate that was made to commemorate the victory of the Laplace Campaign.

Spreading far without end in sight, no matter how far my eyes can see.

Beyond the Aruteiru Mother's river, and on and on....

It is said that this is the oldest city of the Human race in the world.

Excerpt from 『Walk the World』 written by adventurer Bloody Kant..

Part 2

When I saw the Imperial City from a small hill in the distance, Eris and I were shocked, with our mouths agape.

The Imperial City is huge.

Bigger than any other city I have seen in this world.

First, about the castle that was built on top of the hill.

This silver shining castle is as big as or bigger than Perugius' Castle.

Surrounding it are thick fortress-like walls.

Walls high enough that they appear to be more than 20 meters in height.

Even if a stray dragon were to attack, it would not be able to break that wall.

Surrounding the wall are many extravagant mansions.

It is a place where a majority of the high nobles live.

Brilliant mansions the size of castles.

This district is also enclosed by a wall.

Ordinary streets extend from there,

And every so often, a new wall encloses everything.

The city has probably expanded gradually over the years.

Layers of new walls were added to accommodate the expanding city.

However, the city walls stopped after the fifth layer.

From that point on, the buildings simply sprawled out in all directions.

Going beyond the horizon.

It was getting too expensive to build new walls,

So in lieu of walls, knights are instead assigned the work of subjugating the monsters regularly.

Compared to the mega cities in my previous life, this city seemed small.

I felt this in my chest as I take in the view of this fantasy-esque city in the horizon.

"....."

"I'm home."

However, each one of us wore a different expression

In a solemn mood, we all glared at the castle.

Even Ariel got down from the carriage, and looked at the castle.

"Let's go."

At Ariel's request, we entered the capital.

Part 3

The city seemed intimidating from the outside, it wasn't the case inside.

The city entrance is the same as anywhere else.

There were peddlers and adventurers everywhere.

Compared to the other towns though, the adventurers in this city seem to be younger.

While veteran adventurers were visible, they looked like they didn't

have any energy or heart left to continue adventuring.

Speaking of the differences, the roads here are considerably wider.

At least six wagons can pass each other.

That's three lanes in each direction.

This road seems to continue until the city's main square.

"We'll head to my second house, that will be our base. We must have everything ready before we enter the Royal Palace."

At Ariel's words, we continue on.

Our destination is located in the high noble district.

Having said that, just moving through the city takes about half a day.

With Luke leading the way, we press on in the order of Eris, Sylphy, Ghyslaine, the horse-drawn carriage, and I.

Traveling in a single file.

Although the road is plenty wide,

we don't want to get in the way of some noble and cause trouble.

Although one usually doesn't give way to lower nobles, Ariel wasn't displaying her crest on the carriage.

Showing each other's crest would simply take too much time.

Like that, we continued to move into the city.

At some point, the surroundings changed.

From a city of adventurers, to a city of civilians.

At that point, curious townspeople appeared and looked our way.

"Hey..... Isn't that Fitts-sama and Luke-sama?"

"You're right.....then that carriage must be.....?"

"Is Ariel-sama inside it?"

"She probably returned after hearing about his Majesty's illness!"

Sylphy and Luke's faces gave away the contents of the carriage.

In other words, hiding our identity was no longer necessary.

Nor did we intend to hide Ariel completely.

For someone like me to represent a princess would seem unfitting.

Even if Darius doesn't catch wind of her sighting, I wonder if he is ready to launch an attack on Ariel.

Right now, we're not in a hurry.

"Kyaa, Luke-sama!"

"Fitts-sama!"

"Ariel-sama! You have returned!"

Still, they're very popular.

From here and there, cheers come flying.

Sometimes, flowers are thrown.

Not everyone, but about one in five people reacted when they saw us

Ariel is idolized more than I thought.

Luke also waves back.

Ariel has been away from the royal capital for 10 years already, and yet they are still this popular.

She is amazing.

What's really interesting is that our path is suddenly cleared.

I wonder if there's a rule that says a path must be cleared for a noble's carriages.

Those that interfere with the Daimyo will be cut down immediately.

"Look, it's Fitts-sama!"

Every time she receives a cheer, Sylphy scratches and plays with the back of her ear.

That's Sylphy's habit when she gets flustered.

I'll tease her later.

When we passed the square, the cheers became even louder

People rushed here hearing of the news about Ariel's return.

With the increase in commotion, I wonder why the guards haven't come out yet to calm things down.

What if Auber takes advantage of the commotion and attacks from behind.

... Scary.

Though I was afraid of that possibility, no attack came.

That doesn't mean there are no soldiers.

They're cheering with the civilians.

Guys like the commanding officers took the initiative.

Including the common soldiers, it seems that these people are Ariel's supporters.

Even in the Asura Kingdom, there are those unhappy with the current political situation.

We're receiving a hero's welcome.

I don't handle attention well.

"I feel great!"

Though, Eris gave off a different impression.

As we enter the noble's district, the cheering subsides.

I guess Ariel is popular with commoners but not with the nobles.

Perhaps the nobles have no interest in cheering on the street.

Which one is it?

When we enter the noble's district, groups wearing armor walked around.

They wore silver body armor and a full-face helmet, it must be heavy for these guys.

Compared to the soldiers that were cheering earlier, their atmosphere is more serious.

If the soldiers before were the police, then these guys give off the feeling of the army.

"I wonder who they are?"

"They're apprentice knights"

When I ask that unusual question, Eris explained to me.

"A way to become a knight without attending Knight Faction by joining as an apprentice first."

"Oh"

"The role of patrolling the city seems to be the job of apprentice knights as well."

"You know a lot about this."

"Fufun, I heard it from a friend."

I was surprised that Eris had friends.

Though from her tone it's probably not an imaginary friend like Tomochan. ^[1]

"Friends from the Holy Land of the Sword?"

"Yes."

That is, a swordsman friend.

Or Ken Tomo [Sword Friend].

"I'm happy that my Eris has friends. You may fight, but if you hold back sometimes, then you will get along fine."

"But, that child"

Then, Eris stopped talking.

Her gaze snapped elsewhere, and at the same time grabbed her sword.

In Eris's line of sight.

She notices that one of the apprentice knights is staring over here.

Due to the full-faced helmet, I can't tell his expression.

I wonder if he's an enemy.

I feel that something is off.

That person said something to the commanding officer and ran over here.

".....!"

Sylphy, Ghyslaine, and Luke all drew their weapons.

Sylphy is amazing.

She was able to draw her wand faster than Ghyslaine.

"Wa..... !"

Surprised at the three people who suddenly drew their weapons, the person wearing armor stopped walking.

It seems that he couldn't hide his confusion, and he lifts his hand up and takes off his helmet.

What was underneath was a beautiful woman.

There's no words to describe her beauty.

She has flowing hair, forehead wet from sweat, full of sex appeal.

"Eris! Ghyslaine! It's me!"

Behind the horse-drawn carriage, her gaze was directed at us.

To be precise, to Eris.

"....."

Eris is staring at the woman on horseback.

"Eris. So you've survived. Master had said that you were as good as dead if you fight against the Dragon God..... Though, why are you in the Asura Kingdom? If you had contacted me ——"

"Who're you?"

"!..... "

The woman swallowed a breath.

Then she made a somewhat sad face.

It's a sad face, but also a [If it's Eris, then it can't be helped] face.

It is a face people who know Eris well are familiar with.

"..... Kidding."

While joking, Eris quickly jumps off her horse.

"It's been a long time, and since Isolte is wearing a strange armor, I thought it was someone else for a moment."

"A strange armor This is the Asura Kingdom Knights' formal armor, isn't it cool? "

"It looks hard to move around in."

"Since the Water God Style doesn't need to move a lot, this is perfect."

Realizing it's Eris's acquaintance, Luke lowered his sword.

Sylphy also relaxes, but still held onto her wand.

Ghyslaine's sword remains readied as she is overlooking the surroundings.

The moment you let your guard down is your most vulnerable moment, her judgment is correct.

"Are you serving the person inside this horse-drawn carriage? There was this rumor about how the Second Princess has returned around the town, so it's probably her.....But why is Eris..... Oh, there was a story that Ariel was studying in the Magic City Sharia.....then when you met her.....you were hired since you're a [Sword King], something like that?"

Contrary to her seemingly meek appearance, she is surprisingly talkative.

Eris is quiet.

Showered by her rapid fired words, Eris folds her arms and takes her usual pose.

She says.

"Yeah, something like that."

Apparently, she stopped listening in the middle of it.

I'm sure that the conversations between these two women were always like this.

"By the recommendation of my Master, I decided to become a knight. With the appointment of becoming a formal knight, I plan to obtain the title of Water Emperor."

"Really, that's good."

"Yeah."

Luke turns his horse around.

And heads towards us before he comes to a stop.

He asked with a gentle face.

"I'm sorry to interrupt your time of reunion.....are you acquainted with Eris-san?"

"Yes, that's right."

"Sorry but we're in a hurry, let's continue this conversation later so we won't lose time now....."

"I understand."

Saying in a soft demeanor, while facing Isolte, Luke bowed gracefully.

"Then please excuse me, milady. I'm sorry but we are in the middle of our duty. There's a time and place for everything. Until next time, please accept my humble apology."

"That's fine."

"Thank you? Then, allow me to excuse myself."

Luke does not even show a wry smile towards Isolte who turns him down coldly. He maintains his soft smile and mounts his horse.

Luke then moves to the front with his horse.

Isolte was looking at his figure in disgust.

"Was that Rudeus? Like I've imagined, he has a perverse attitude.....even though he is a mage, he carries a sword, is he trying to look cool? Eris, did you marry such a guy? "

"..... I'm married with Rudeus."

"Hah.....? He is indeed good looking, but I don't like his way of greeting another woman in front of his wife. Is Eris's taste bad?"

".....?"

So as not to let Luke hear it, Isolte said this in a hushed tone.

Eris has a puzzled face.

Apparently, Isolte mistook Luke for me.

At a position to hear such gossips clearly, I wanted to move away a little.

While I have no intention to look cool, occasionally I also want to wield a sword.

"I'll be going now."

"Right. I apologize for delaying you when you are busy..... Will you be staying here for a while?"

Hearing that, Eris glanced at me.

At least, we'll probably stay in this city until Ariel takes the throne.

I return with a nod.

Isolte saw me for the first time at that moment.

She has a puzzled face.

"Um, that person is?"

This is awkward.

Should I tell her that I am Rudeus?

Though there is no reason to take a false name, the other side had just gossiped about me too, the air seems to be unpleasant.

"Hihin!"

And, then Matsukaze ^[2] moved.

He moved towards Eris's side against my will, and used his head to nudge her back.

Hey, don't move without my permission, I'll give you some cabbage later.

"Oh sorry, you're in a hurry."

However, when she saw that behavior, Isolte got the hint.

"Well, when I'm off-duty, I will show you around..... At that time, please introduce this person."

She said this person, and sent me a glance.

If someone said, [Let me introduce you to Rudeus] here, what kind of face will she make?

"I'm not very sure but okay."

"You're not very sure... as always it seems. Well then, may you have the protection of Saint Millis."

After bowing gracefully, Isolte went away.

Hmm, so she is a believer of the Millis religion.

Eris kept looking at the figure in her back, but soon faces forward and mounts the horse.

After confirming Eris is ready, Luke starts to move and the horse-drawn carriage begins to follow suit.

"She is [Water King] Isolte. We met in the Holy Land of the Sword a while back."

" I see. It's good that you get along with each other well."

"Well, but..."

Cutting her words in the middle, Eris looked at Isolte.

The silver armored platoon moved away and disappeared into the alley.

"She may become our enemy..... "

Oh, is that so?

Water King Isolte Cruel.

I heard from Orsted that she is a person that may show up as an enemy.

In the first place, I have already informed Eris about the high possibility that the Water God Reida will be our enemy.

At that time, Eris might have already presumed that Isolte will also become our enemy.

Since her position is that of an apprentice knight, I don't think that would be the case..... but anything is possible.

Her position may be low, but her skill is still King rank.

If it becomes a battlefield, the possibility that it'll come to that is high.

" Eris, are you okay with that?"

"I can't wait. The debt I owe her in the Holy Land of the Sword shall be paid."

"Is that so?"

I don't know myself, but those kinds of words came out without hesitation, in other words, these two people have such a relationship.

It's a rivalry.

I don't understand it that well.

However, when it comes to giving up your life, it's not something I understand at all.

If possible, I want both of them to survive and continue to compete.

Because it will all end if one of you dies.

Part 4

We turned right in the middle of the road and continued uphill.

Huge walls are being guarded by soldiers, but when Luke showed his crest, we're allowed through easily.

After we passed through the district of intermediate nobles, and

under a wall again, we were surrounded with houses that were as large as the castles of a small country.

It's the district of the upper nobility.

The second house of Ariel was in a somewhat distant position from the royal castle.

Despite being located within the city, it is five times larger than my house.

Not as big as Eris's family home that doubled as a fort in times of war, but way too big to be a private home.

It was already evening.

Since we entered the city in the early afternoon, we've spent half a day already.

When we were entering the building's garden, people that looked like butlers came out.

Seeing Luke, they immediately went inside and collected the maids in a hurry to greet us.

In total, there are around five or so people.

Even during her absence, they continued to manage Ariel's house.

We are greeted by the servants and moved into the building.

Inside, it was gorgeous.

Although the furnishings in Perugius's castle are also top tier, it gave off a vibe of being a fine arts gallery, this feels like a villa belonging to an Asura noble.

The rank of the place is on par with Eris's castle.

After being assigned a room, I wash away the fatigue of travel by bathing.

The bathroom had decorations made of metal, even on the pail that is used for bathing, was glittering.

There is a bathtub right in the room, but there is also a bathroom as well.

I probably wouldn't use that.

After bathing, I had a meal.

Present are four people, Ariel, Eris, Sylphy, and I.

Ariel's attendants seem to be dining at a different location.

"Well, Rudeus-sama"

"Yes"

"With your help, Rudeus-sama, I was able to come here safely"

After the meal is over, Ariel called me again.

"I will begin my operations from tomorrow.

To welcome Perugius-sama, and to prepare the 『Venue』 where I will bring down Senior Minister Darius.

To verify the nobles' request during my absence, and to gather information.

Make contact with allies that have been lying in wait for us, strengthening our foundations.... We will be busy "

"Yes."

"Before Darius makes his move, let's get the 『Venue』 ready as soon as possible. Fortunately, the powerful nobles have already gathered here in the capital at the news of father's illness."

Soon, there will be a decisive battle.

"How much time will you need to make your preparations?"

"Ten days"

"OK."

..... Ten days.

That's fast.

"I have all the pieces gathered here.

It'll depend on how the other side plays this, but I believe our victory is assured.

Although I think that the possibility is low,

but the possibility exists that the 『Venue』 might unfortunately become a battlefield."

Honestly, we should try to preserve our strength, but that's determined by what the other side has planned for us.

"I think our strength here is enough, but you can't be too sure. Before that, let's reduce the enemy's main force as much as we can first."

"Right."

"Rudeus-sama, Eris-sama, and Sylphy, I would like you to play that role."

Preemptively depleting the enemy's forces...

Indeed, our opponent may have employed many from the North God Style.

"However, it will be difficult to launch an attack and ensure the safety of Ariel at the same time."

In this city, Ariel has many allies.

But, there is no one at the North Emperor level.

Eris, Sylphy, and I are the offense team, while only Ghyslaine and Luke will protect Ariel.

Ghyslaine is dependable, but if they send more than a North King, she might be in trouble.

"Therefore, I will act as the bait."

"The bait..... ?"

"I will reveal an opportunity for them to attack this place on purpose. I'll be safe thanks to the magic items in my possession"

Like that substitution magic ring, for example.

Someone can use it to impersonate Ariel.

Create a situation where we look vulnerable and strike the opponent back.

In that situation, Ariel will make her move.

Returning from meetings with nobles and behind-the-scenes work.

During morning, evening, late at night.

It would be possible to feint vulnerability in our movements.

If the other side comes to us, it saves us the trouble of finding them.

"But Sylphy, it means that you will have to play a little dangerous role....."

"I have no objections."

Sylphy answers back immediately.

"This is the last push, so let's do our best."

So Sylphy will be Ariel's double...

Well, if it becomes a battle there is no safe place anyway.

After coming this far it doesn't matter where you are.

Since the person herself is willing to do it, I will protect her with all my power as well.

"Will they take the bait?"

"It's about... 50-50 I'd say."

After all, during our journey to the capital, we weren't attacked a single time.

Although we were on alert and the journey lasted almost a month.

There must have been a chance to attack.

If it happens that Ariel's 『Venue』 is not anticipated and the enemy is crushed with overwhelming force, I would feel highly motivated.

"It'll be good if we can bait them out. If not, you'll at least be safe."

"Unless I get caught ... if I do, it will be an all-out war."

"I think in that case, Rudeus-sama will be more burdened."

I will be.

..... I wonder if it will okay.

"Do you not have reinforcements here?"

"The Ranoa Kingdom have prepared some in advance. But, they are only advanced level swordsmen, and advanced level magicians at best. Since the other party has the North Emperor and the North Kings, at the day and place of the 『Venue』, we will be under-powered. "

That's true.

"If it comes to that point, we will borrow that person's power."

"That person?"

Is it Orsted?

I wonder if he has already arrived in this town.

We still keep contact, but there is only a few thing to be reported since he is a man of few words.

Since Luke is wary of me, Ariel may not meet Orsted again.

"Well, when it comes to that, I will request his help."

Sylphy had tilted her neck at this exchange, but well it's fine.

"I will need your help in that regard."

"Okay."

Things to do in the next 10 days were also decided.

Starting tomorrow, the battle for the Asura Kingdom begins.

Notes

1. Haganai reference; Tomo-chan is Yozora air/imaginary friend
2. Greyrat family horse

Chapter 183 - Mortal Combat at Dusk

Part 1

The next day.

I left for the palace with Ariel.

Tris is waiting for her turn to act back at base.

The two servants are not with us.

So, it's six people now.

The two servants will just get in the way when the fight breaks out.

They also have their own homes to go back to. Their Houses are both important allies to Ariel.

Besides, those two have already been assigned their job by Ariel.

She really intends to finish everything in ten days.

Seeing the Royal Palace for the first time.

Looked at from afar, the royal castle of the Asura Kingdom is certainly big.

Perhaps even bigger than Perugius's Sky Castle.

Nestled at the back of the castle is where the royal palace is located.

That is where the Royal family lives, and it's a place filled with palace gardens.

Supposedly, the palace is forbidden to everyone except the royal family, but that is not important right now.

I'm a little curious about the King's harem, but I have no business with them for now.

But today's business is paying condolences to the ill king and make preparations for the 『Venue』.

There's an interesting thing about the royal palace.

No, it might not be that amazing.

Since it's this place, it's not so strange for such a thing to be here.

Though I say that, I couldn't help but look twice when I see it.

A portrait of Perugius.

One of the three lined portraits.

The unique features of the Dragon Race are extremely prominent.

The beauty of Perugius in the portrait seemed to be exaggerated, making him look 10 years younger than he actually is.

Honestly, I didn't recognize it to be Perugius at first.

Since I didn't recognize it right away, I looked away from it for a moment.

However, because the plate just below the portrait caught my eye, I did a double take.

His name is written.

Perugius Dola.

I'm surprised.

I'm surprised because Perugius's portrait hangs right next to the portraits of various Asura kings throughout history.

Beside him hangs a portrait of a human race I've never seen before.

A portrait of a man with silver hair with streaks of blonde.

Perhaps it's because Perugius told me, I immediately recognize the

portrait.

That person is the North God Kalman.

And this Dragon race that looks to be half-human would be Dragon King Ulpen, I guess.

They are the three heroes who defeated the Demon God.

If it was the me from before, I might've looked down upon them for not finishing the job.

Though, after hearing Orsted's story I won't make fun of them too much.

After all, they had defeated the full powered Demon God Laplace in battle.

A long time ago, the Demon Dragon King Laplace was considered as the strongest being in the world, and Demon God Laplace is a fragment of that being.

That's why these portraits are decorated in such a place.

To remember and honor the legend of a hero.

He's a great person.

Geez, I was even worried about Perugius's appearance at the 『Venue』,

Now that I see his portrait hanging next to the king's though.....

All right, it should be safe.

Part 2

It's been three days already.

The plan was on track.

Ariel's 『Venue』 preparations are progressing smoothly.

According to her, the number of nobles who are looking forward to

her return is increasing.

While being her escort, Ariel introduced me to dozens of the nobility.

Honestly, I didn't remember all of their names.

The first prince Grabell and Senior minister Darius.

I haven't been introduced to them yet, but I had the chance to see them from a distance.

If I had to describe Darius with one phrase, it would be, he's an old timer.

A fat body, flabby cheeks, and disgusting eyes.

With such an ugly figure up close, he looks like a pig monster.

When he sees me, he looks afraid.

It was as if he's looking at the grim reaper.

Though I can't be sure based on his look alone....

Since his reaction is so easy to read, I don't even need to check whether he is Hitogami's apostle or not.

The first prince Grabell is a normal looking old man with fluffy blonde hair.

He's not a prince in his teens or his twenties like I imagined.

The feeling that I get from his 30-something year old looks combined with his mustache is a little far away from the image of a prince.

But, when I saw him, there was a feeling of [I want to work under this person.]

This is probably his charisma at work.

Come to think of it, I've heard rumors that the second prince Halfaus lost a power struggle with the first prince, and that he is currently under house arrest.

I wonder if Orsted did something about that?

Maybe it's because Orsted knew this, he told me not to worry about the second prince?

Anyways, the people who backed up the second prince faction had given up on victory, and with any luck, they will flock to Ariel's side after hearing of her return.

They seem to help me and Ariel on the 『Venue』 preparations.

Ariel has her own fight.

While my opponents are the ones that attack Ariel.

We are attacked several times.

We haven't caught any big game yet, but assassins were sent on a daily basis.

Their target has been only Ariel thus far.

More specifically, Sylphy who is impersonating Ariel.

Whether we are moving, eating or sleeping.

We can't afford to relax even during meals and sleep.

Also, the real Ariel is wearing a wig and is masquerading as a maid,

She eats the plain meals (but still better than that of lower class knights') of a poor maid,

and sleeps soundly in the shoddy bedrooms of the maids.

"The number of assassination attempts is much higher than before, but it's not a big deal since Rudi is here."

Are Sylphy's words.

Although the assassins are small fries, it's good practice for Eris, Ghyslaine, and me, although I suffered a shortage of it.

If I was alone, I would have struggled a little.

Indecisive about whether or not to kill.

If I think about it like that.

I'm glad that I called Ghyslaine and Eris here.

Fortunately, an enemy that can beat Eris and Ghyslaine did not show up.

If it became an all out war at the 『Venue』, it would be a little troublesome.

I should be able to handle the North King and the North Emperor if they come at me one at a time.

All that's left is the Water God. Sylphy can take care of the rest.

However, if there is another strong opponent, Ariel's safety may be jeopardized.

I hope Orsted can figure something out if that's the case. I couldn't manage to contact him ever since we entered the capital.

First of all, we don't even know if he is in the city or not.

Anyways, faith alone won't solve anything..

Also, just in case, I want to reduce the number of enemies.

Ariel nods to acknowledge the situation when I consult her.

"Let's set up a trap."

That day, Ariel was talking about something with a noble from the first prince's faction.

The topic is quite vulgar, Ariel is talking about how Ghyslaine and Eris were both having their time of the month that day.

The noble looks really interested in Eris.

Eris puts on a very uncomfortable look.

Passing rumors that the escorts are in poor form in order to bait an attack.

In the end, this strategy was unsuccessful.

It might have been too obvious.

Even the next day, assassins did not appear.

Part 3

The fifth day.

There is no attack.

Instead, the influential nobles supporting Ariel are targeted.

Mostly those who promoted the construction of the『Venue』.

However, they also seemed to have their own means of self-defense, so it's nothing to worry about.

Although, those attacks might just serve as a warning.

Only the attempts from a few small fries of the First Prince faction.

On that day, I meet a person.

Philemon Notus Greyrat.

Just as the information said, he had defected to Grabell's side.

Philemon.

He's in about his mid-30's.

He had a face that was very similar to Paul's.

But, he doesn't have the sense of self-confidence and aloofness that Paul had.

He gives off the impression of a fearful and hungry rat.

Afraid of risks, taking the safe alternative, he's the type of man that flees at the first sign of trouble.

I don't hate people like him, but this old man likely hated Sauros.

Facing him, Luke talks about this and that.

It would not be an exaggeration to call it a fight.

About why he betrayed Ariel, and what about their own efforts.

Philemon ignored Luke's questions by saying [You wouldn't understand even if I explain it to you].

Luke's face is full of disbelief.

However, Luke pleads to him that it's not too late to come back to Ariel's side.

Even so, he didn't listen.

And finally he said with certain disdain, [You think you're a better successor as family head than your brother or something?] He spurs Luke and walks away.

I think it's a terrible attitude.

At least, it is not an attitude he should have towards his son, who had been struggling in a foreign country for more than ten years.

However, Paul was also like that once.

I can understand his pain.

Asura nobles have their own set of morals, I shouldn't one-sidedly judge them.

Assuming that Ariel wins over Luke.

And Grabell wins over Luke's older brother.

Regardless of who takes the crown, the Notus House will survive.

Considering that, and their attitude, in some ways, it might just be jealousy towards Luke,

or he might just simply hate Luke.

Putting my personal feelings aside...

More likely than not, Ghyslaine will kill Philemon.

Then Luke's family will be put on the brink of collapse.

If Luke cares, he'll have to take on as the house head.

But he might also consider his own feelings.

It's a bad situation.

Part 4

Day nine.

Preparations of the『Venue』 have been completed.

The party itself will be located in the royal castle.

All of the famous nobles of the Asura kingdom will be participating.

Ariel wanted it that way.

For the Second Princess Ariel to host a party to nominate the First Prince Grabell as the next king.

If it were me, I would not participate in such a party, which obviously looks like a trap.

About the reason why the Asura nobles are attending.

Participation of such parties is a noble's duty.

It seems that there were a number of interferences, but Ariel overcame them all.

All that's left is the actual show.

Now, it's my turn.

Tomorrow, it's going to be a tough day.

Someone might die.

Will it be Eris? Or Sylphy? Or Ghyslaine?

I will do everything I can to make sure that doesn't happen.

I might not be able to sleep with all the excitement today.

Maybe I should ask to sleep with Eris tonight...

Part 5

It happened on the eve of this night.

It was a moonless night.

All preparations are complete, and the only thing left to do is to wait for the real thing tomorrow.

Tonight, just sleep and rest up.

With that thought in mind, we head back to base.

A man stands in the middle of the road.

If you look at his head, he looks like a man from the beast race.

Rabbit's ears Certainly from the Mirudetto race.

It's a bunny if it's a woman, but I wonder what I'd say if it's a man.

"....."

Wearing matte black armor, he stands with a straight sword in hand.

Blocking the way of the horse-drawn carriage.

"Who is it!"

Luke on the side of the carriage is out in front, it was a challenge.

He keeps quiet.

I didn't expect an answer.

The assailant's name is ——

"One of the Three Swords of the North God style, the North King 『Twin Swords』 Knuckle Guard."

He actually answered.

"....."

The next moment, Knuckle Guard splits into two.

Slowly, as if it's a mirage, he splits up in two....

"Knuckle-niichan. Is it a good idea to say our name at this time?"

"Haha, probably not? What a surprise.... Guard is smart."

"Hehe, it's because I have been studying in recent years."

Never mind, he didn't split.

They're twins.

It was actually two swordsmen with identical faces.

"Certainly, when our employer is someone like Darius, it's no good to say anything."

"Come to think of it, since we're assassins. We shouldn't have said our employer's name."

"Knuckle-niichan. Oh yeah, we definitely shouldn't have."

"I know."

Well, to be honest, it's obvious who hired them even if they didn't say, but.

And, at that slightly anticlimactic moment, Eris came forward.

She dismounts from the horse, and unsheaths her sword.

"Eris Greyrat."

In response to the massive amount of killing intent, the twins' ears twitched.

"Oh, I've heard the rumors. 『Mad Sword King』!"

"Her sword skills sharp like a fang and a temper violent like a demon beast!"

"We of the weak Mirudetto tribe express our gratitude!"

"There is no shortage of opponents!"

Eris has set her sword in an upward position,
The twins stand side to side in mirrored stances.

"We are each half of a man."

"Thus both of us are one."

"Even if it's two on one."

"We won't call it cowardly."

No, but two against one is unfair.

As I think that, another figure appears from behind the horse-drawn carriage.

It's a small shadow.

The shadow wore an armor of black as though it was filled with ink.

Wielding a black sword and a black shield in his hands.

"....."

He does not say his name.

He didn't need to say his name, but he took a stance.

Facing him is Ghyslaine.

Naturally, she draws her sword against the man.

"I will pay the debt from the other day."

".....Dorudia's eyes are good in the night..... I'm at a disadvantage now."

It is Wii Taa.

Last time, Ghyslaine was cornered by him.

But the other day, I already told Ghyslaine about Wii Taa's trick.

I do not know whether she understood me, but I guess she will be

alright this time.

The rabbits at the front and the hobbit at the rear.

Speaking of this, this situation is strange because it seems to be very simple,

It's the North King Gate in action.

Who should I support?

I will assist Eris, while Luke and Sylphy will be backing up Ghyslaine.

That way, I can level the playing field against the two rabbits.

That's what I think, but I must not move yet.

Auber is not here.

This situation is constraining my movements.

Ariel isn't in this place.

Using a different route, Ariel has been moved to the second safe house from the royal castle.

Therefore, it is better to take the formation of Luke covering Ghyslaine, while Sylphy covers Eris respectively.

However, if we do that, the enemy will also realize it.

That Ariel isn't here.

Then, they will retreat.

Since the target is absent, it's the obvious move.

Tomorrow, they will ambush us in a more perfect position.

At that time, they would bring reinforcements.

Now's the chance.

It's a chance to kill two North Kings.

If they are not defeated here, tomorrow will be harder.

If Luke covers Ghyslaine, then I will cover Eris.

In that case, Auber would engage Sylphy.

Sylphy can't win against Auber.

I can't say that with certainty, but Orsted said so.

Again, I'm stuck.

".....No."

Think.

The last time, where was Auber lurking?

We aren't in a forest this time, so he's not in the ground.

This time, he is lurking somewhere nearby.

If he is lurking nearby, he's surely in our line of sight.

So, I only need to spot him.

Find out his hiding place and finish him with a single blow.

That way, I can assist Ghyslaine and Eris without worry.

"It's all right Rudeus, I can win by myself."

Eris's voice resounds in the dark night.

Indeed, no swordsman can stop Eris, even for that Knuckle Guard or something.

Since they call themselves each half of a man, I wonder if they're each at the North Saint level at best.

If only to that extent, Eris should be able to suppress their swords with a single blow.

If she strikes either side, one of them will die.

Being capable of it, it doesn't seem to require much effort.

Ghyslaine also has the advantage in reach.

Ghyslaine, with her tall stature, and Wii Taa the Hobbit, there is too much of a difference in their reach.

Still, she won't find a gap that easily.

But they will not withdraw

Again, probably because they're after one person.

Three pieces, our opponent is committed.

They intend to kill us here.

Auber is somewhere.

Where could he be hiding around here?

It's hard to say whether this place is suitable for an attack.

A wall on the left, and a noble's residence on the right.

The right of us appears to have many places to hide.

The garden there is surrounded by high walls.

There is an alley between the houses.

But since it's wide enough to allow passage for horse carriages, it's not an easy place to hide in.

Maybe he's hiding in the garden and intends to break through the walls?

No, that's stupid, he is not Badigadi.

What about the wall?

It's high enough for me to have to turn my head up to see the top.

Perhaps jumping down with a rope from there?

Or come jumping off?

If it's the North Emperor, it's possible to do that....

Then, from below?

Just like before, did he hide himself under the ground?

No, that's not it.

Given what happened last time, we'll obviously check the ground for movements.

I don't think that was overlooked.

Where's

Is there a blind spot?

I left the rear of the horse-drawn carriage.

Luke is located right in front of the horse-drawn carriage.

There are only two light sources.

Torches were equipped on the horse-drawn carriage.

Thus I summoned a Spirit of Light.

The light's intensity is strong, I can even clearly see the figures of the assailants in black.

There is no place that's not visible.

Or still on the wall?

..... he can snipe us with magic from the wall?

I send the Spirit of Light towards the wall,

".....!"

Found it.

When I first saw the wall, I did not notice.

I wasn't paying attention to the backgrounds.

In the middle of the wall, a cloth pattern that closely resembles the color of the walls had been laid there.

If it was during the day, it would have been obvious.

Or if we had the light from car headlights, it would look peculiar.

But with torches on the horse-drawn carriage, chances are that we won't notice the difference.

However, if illuminated by the Spirit of Light, the difference can be seen.

I win.

I point my staff at the wall.

"....."

There is no chanting.

Usually I will yell out my spell to inform my surroundings, but I won't this time.

Stone Cannon.

Full force.

..... Do it.

Farewell, Auber.

"Kuoo!?"

Was it a gut feeling?

Or intuition as a warrior?

I did not hesitate even for even a second.

Despite that, he seems to have sensed something.

Releasing the camouflage just in time, Auber manages to evade my magic.

No, he didn't completely evade it.

The Stone Cannon pierced through Auber's leg and left a big hole there.

While taking a passive defense stance, he fell from the wall.

"Nuguua!"

It marked the start of the battle.

"Chi!"

I shoot another round of Stone Cannon at Auber.

Now that he has better footing, I was sure Auber would parry it without difficulty.

"Toaaa!"

Luke approached from behind.

Shifting his body weight to his left hand, Auber deflected Luke's sword.

While still lying down, he knocks Luke off balance and tries to stab him.

I intercept it with the Stone Cannon.

"Nukku!"

Auber jumps up and stands up on one foot.

With one of his leg incapacitated, most of Auber's mobility is gone.

While steadily standing on one leg, he looks at the front, back, me, and the horse-drawn carriage.

"....."

Following his line of sight.

During that moment's exchange, I managed to grasp the flow of the battle.

Exactly as Eris declared, she defeated those two people alone.

But Eris wasn't unscathed, her shoulder is injured.

Her left shoulder is hanging loosely.

But, Eris didn't care about her own wound and turned towards here.

Her line of sight is on Auber.

Ghyslaine had overwhelmed Wii Taa.

Wii Taa had already lost one arm.

Wii Taa had lost his shield while Ghyslaine is uninjured.

Ghyslaine is delivering the final blow to Wii Taa when I looked her way.

"Aubeeer!"

Wii Taa shouts.

And, at the same time he threw something on the ground.

A powder-like [bafun] sound is made and we were instantly wrapped in black smoke.

Was it some kind of magic tool? Or magic item?

Wii Taa used the black smoke at night for blinding.

But, even if I understood it, experiencing it felt different.

I could not see anything.

In this dense fog, the sound where Wii Taa was running to can be heard.

Following him is Ghyslaine's footsteps.

<A sword abruptly swings down in front of me.>

I quickly avoid it.

Wii Taa ran by me.

Was he aiming at me?

No, he was aiming at the horse-drawn carriage.

"Leave it!"

The next moment, the door of the carriage opened and while Sylphy was coming out, a magic was released.

Melded magic 『Flame Tornado』.

The melded magic of wind and flame blew away the black smoke and shed light on the surroundings.

Status check.

Ghyslaine, alive and well.

Luke, alive and well.

Sylphy, alive and well.

Eris, also alive and well.

Wii Taa disappeared into the alley.

Did he run away?

Fair enough, even if we failed to catch Wii Taa, I only need to kill Auber.

Auber.... is not here?

Where is he?

"Rudeus!"

Eris shouted.

Looking at her line of sight, Auber was using claws to climb the wall like a cockroach.

He disappeared into the top of the wall at an incredible speed.

The others cannot follow him.

And, now is not the time for hesitation.

"We will follow Wii Taa!"

The decision was made immediately to enter the alley.

Can we catch up?

A small part of me thinks, is this the wrong decision?

When Wii Taa fled to the back alley, should I immediately give chase?

That guy is missing an arm.

His body is out of balance, you cannot run quickly like that.

But, since it's North God Style, their training might...

And, when I stepped into the alley to think, I stopped walking.

Wii Taa is dead.

A large hole is agape in his small body, and he fell into a pool of blood.

This method of death felt like a deja vu.

I've experienced being killed in that manner.

No signs of anyone around.

However, he ought to have been here.

And he did it.

Orsted, that is.

"Rudeus.....you did it."

Looking back, Eris was there.

From the roughly slashed shoulder, Eris shed blood and got sluggish while laughing and grinning.

"Oh, right ..."

For now, I cast healing magic by touching Eris's shoulder,.

It is a terrible wound.

Although it didn't sever the tendon.

Seeing you injured like this makes my heart ache.

"Thank you."

A simple thanks from Eris before she turns around.

She yelled out after returning back to the road.

"Rudeus killed the little one just now!"

At her words, sighs of relief flowed around.

"I'm sorry, I was a nuisance."

"No, I know Rudeus obviously did that so he can focus on Auber but"

"It was a good opportunity when he got attacked by me earlier, but I was a little slow."

"I also missed a chance, it happens!"

While talking to each other, we dealt with the corpses.

If I had used a different magic, Auber might not had a chance to escape.

Alternatively, I should have used Quagmire beforehand to rob him of his mobility.

Well, it's pointless to think about it now.

The fight ended in an instant, a fluid situation.

All that matters is that we won, things said now won't change anything.

This time,

The North King Wii Taa.

The North King Knuckle Guard.

We succeeded in killing two people (actually three).

We have succeeded in reducing the enemy's forces as planned.

Auber had escaped, but I can claim victory here.

All that's left tomorrow is the main event.

『The incredibles! Three Swords of North God.』

Auber of the 『Peacock Sword』. He is skillful using an irregular fighting style, taking advantage of terrain and magic tools.

With simple skills and flashy outfits, he was named the Peacock.

Wii Taa of the 『Light and Darkness』. In order to overcome his handicap of a Hobbits' small body, he excelled at blinding the enemy.

He also has a way to fight even when he is deprived of sight.

Dead.

Knuckle Guard of the 『Twin Sword』.

Twin Swordsmen. To overwhelm their opponents with a mirror-like combination.

Two people as one.

Dead.

Four in all, The Three Swords of North God!

Chapter 184 - Ariel's Battlefield

Part 1

The party is held in the royal castle.

In one of the halls that was made for large-scale parties.

A long table.

The seating arrangement is predetermined.

It is a venue that I thought would be impossible to prepare in only 10 days.

With all the preparations complete, the only thing left is to welcome the guests. I steady my resolve.

As members of the entrance staff, Eris and I stand guard near the waiting room entrance, keeping an eye out on the attendants.

The waiting room is not particularly small, in fact there is a buffet party here.

Those who have a look of expectation.

People who held an expression of anxiety.

Such people had arrived at the venue early.

They're in the waiting room. What will they do after they hear Ariel's story today,

or what kind of response for support in the Grabell Faction will result from it?

The outcome of this story amuses them.

They're just here for the entertainment. There's not a person of note in the midst.

They have less impact in either case, merely small fries.

The first big fish appeared somewhat late.

Philemon Notus Greyrat.

He is accompanied by his escort and eldest son. He has the eyes of someone who's likely to curse me who is at the entrance.

And told me.

".....Fun, did you think that you can return to the Notus House now, after abandoning it?"

It was an unexpected question.

"I've never even thought of that."

"That much should be obvious, and don't think you can throw that Greyrat name around willy nilly."

"Eh, oh, yes"

After speaking those prearranged words, Philemon made a short appearance in the waiting room.

Before disappearing into a private room reserved for the upper nobility.

"What was that about"

Eris is angry.

Come to think of it.

Some time ago, when I was in Eris's house.

I was told to keep my head down as well.

Well, back then I never thought much about that.

What if the House Paul bowed his head to wasn't Boreas, but Notus?

And what if I was the home tutor for someone on Notus's side

instead?

Those people would probably want to keep me down...

Just as well.

Indeed, Philemon is the younger brother of Paul, and thus my uncle, but he will be killed by Ghyslaine later.

Since he's an asshole to me, that won't hurt.

Starting with Philemon, the main stars of this 『Party』 appeared one after another.

Parents and two attendants from Tris's house also came.

Then the rest of the four major lords.

Euros, Zephyrus.

And, Boreas.

Boreas's current head What was his name again?

Is it Thomas or was it Gordon....?

I remember it being the same name as a certain locomotive train. ^[1]

Ah, that right. It was James.

He also brought his eldest son along.

As for the face, I guess he is more like Sauros than Philip.

He also has a stocky figure.

But his face was considerably haggard.

According to Ariel's story, he resigned his ministerial desk job, and seems to have become a lord.

As a lord who lost his territory, I heard that he has been in a considerable predicament.

Still, it takes more than that to crush the house,

Perhaps because the land remains even though the territory is lost.

Or, it's thanks to James' hard work.

..... Do your best.

The reconstruction of the Fedoa territory has not progressed.

However, James has been doing everything he can, it can be seen from his haggard face.

He was also impacted by the Metastasis Event.

A desperate man, but he survived.

A person who was directly involved with the Metastasis Event would understand the meaning of survival differently.

Anyway, I don't know him, and he doesn't know those involved in the Metastasis Event.

"....."

Rather than to me..... he gave a glimpse to Eris who is standing next to me, before going back towards the private room again.

And finally.

Senior Minister Darius came later than anyone else.

He's followed by one escort.

When Darius sees me, he quickly looks away in fear.

The escort sees me and approaches me.

Finally seeing him in a well lit area, he really has a funny looking head.

In casual wear, with a hair shaped like an inverted satellite dish.

Four swords lined his waist.

"It's the first time meeting you.

My name is North Emperor Auber Corvette.

I go by the name of 『Peacock Sword』 on the streets."

When I took a glance at his feet, I confirm that he is standing firmly with both feet.

There is no sign of him limping when he walks.

He seems to have fully recovered.

If he used a healer from Asura Kingdom, I suppose that level of injury is recoverable.

"Pleased to meet you. I've heard of your name. I'm Rudeus Greyrat."

"『Quagmire』..... No, I wonder if it would be better to call you『Dragon's Dog』?"

So in other words, Orsted is the 『Owner』.

A nostalgic name.

Woof~woof.

However, to say something like 『Dragon's Dog』,

Doesn't sound what a sleeper agent of Hitogami would say...

"Whoops, pardon me..... I heard that you have been ambushed several times on the way here."

"....Ah, yeah."

"To assassins who used foul tricks, you've fought them off brilliantly."

You're calling it foul yourself...?

In a joking tone, he is laughing.

But Auber's eyes are not smiling.

"Next time, in a head-on match."

For a brief moment, he shows a serious face that doesn't match his looks, after that Auber takes his leave.

Just now seemed like a declaration of war.

I think that he made me his #1 or #2 target.

In that case, maybe he is the third apostle after all.

First Prince Grabell won't come to a waiting room like this.

He'll head straight to the venue.

With this, the cast is complete.

Part 2

The time is ripe for the party to begin.

The nobles file in and sit in their assigned seats.

I look towards the guards lined against the wall.

Today, thanks to Ariel, the number of guard soldiers in the vicinity of the party hall is small.

Therefore, most of the nobles have come with their escort.

Ghyslaine and Eris stand beside me, keeping watch of the surroundings.

Sylphy isn't here.

She has a particularly important assignment for the party, thus has stepped out.

Seeing the nobles filling the venue, Ariel stands up from her seat and makes her first move.

"Thank you for gathering here today, despite your busy schedule."

Ariel started her greeting.

She began to talk about his majesty's illness, this and that of the domestic situation in recent years,

She talks about her thought of Asura Kingdom while studying

abroad.....

Then the attack began.

"Now then, today, to those who have gathered here. I have found two people that I would like to introduce to everyone."

Showing up simultaneously at Ariel's words is a beautifully dressed up woman emanating an irresistible appeal.

She comes out from the entrance and crosses the hall slowly,

And stands beside Ariel.

Looking at her face, Darius' eyes opened wide.

Among the nobles, there are those who stand up with pale faces.

They are the Purplehorse family.

"On the way of my travel, I met her by chance. The second daughter of the Purplehorse House, Miss Tristina"

The lady was introduced.

Tris picks up the hem of her dress and curtsy so perfectly that Eris could never imitate.

"As introduced, I am Tristina Purplehorse."

The venue was in shock.

She should be missing.

There is also a gossip that she is dead.

And yet she turns out to be alive.

And grown up beautifully.

From a specific direction, there is a little uproar.

"But how, why here.....?"

"When she was found, I protected her since she had been very weak. As such, towards someone present here tonight, she has a

few particular words for him, as a result, she came.”

Following those words, Tris steps forward.

She sits herself near Darius, who has the honored seat.

Tris started to talk while looking at him like seeing a pig.

Not in a manner of speech that was natural for an everyday thief, but with beautiful words befitting a noble daughter.

She was betrayed by the house and was bought by Senior Minister Darius.

She talks about how she was kept like a dog by Senior Minister Darius.

And that she was almost killed back in the Fedoa Metastasis Event.

Luckily she was picked up by thieves, and became the boss's woman.

Then Ariel came to her aid.

A story with some dramatization, but spoken indifferently.

It's a story designed to make the one who hears it cry.

As a thief, Tristina survived with her own power.

Enduring in that place, and helped by Ariel that she met by chance.

It is a touching story.

In the crowd of nobles, there are those who shed tears blatantly....but they are still nobles which were prepared by Ariel I guess.

There are those, particularly from Darius' side, who can not hide the puzzlement on their faces.

Nervous sweat drips down the head of the Purplehorse House.

But the main suspect Darius looks quite composed. He must have survived predicaments like this countless times.

The speech ended.

"Now, then....."

Ariel came out to the front.

While wearing the usual cool smile, she opens her mouth.

"This was surprising. Darius-sama. I also did not think that it will suddenly be known by the public.

No, surely. Using your power, Darius-sama, you kidnapped children of nobles, and treated them as your sex slaves "

Ariel's tone suddenly heats up.

Denouncing Darius, with her pounding like voice.

"In addition, such a thing is done by the hand of the Senior Minister who is the backbone of the government! In this Asura Kingdom, evil shall not be tolerated! There will be no excuse! "

Darius, made a sound of plates cracking with a snort and laugh.

He stands up slowly.

"Ariel-sama, isn't your joke a bit extreme today?"

As he says that, Darius directs his eyes to Tris like an old friend.

"And to bring a woman, whose origin is not certain, to be passed off as a child of the Purplehorse House. No, for this Darius who will not stand for such a rumor to be spread about him, it is the first time being told a lie like that face to face."

While laughing, Darius looks around his surroundings.

[Tris is a fake], he gestures to those around for support.

"So Darius-sama, you said that talk just now was a lie?"

"Exactly. But, allow me to question Ariel sama. If this lady Tristina is really a child of the Purplehorse House, can you prove that?"

"Tristina."

In Ariel's word, Tristina took out something from her breasts.

It was a ring.

A ring with a beautiful purple gem.

On the jewelry, there is an engraved horse.

"This is used for someone from the Purplehorse House to prove kinship. The picture of the horse engraved on amethyst."

Even with such evidence, there is no change on Darius's face.

Rather, he has a more disgusting smile than earlier.

"I see, I see. With that thing, she is certainly a child of the Purplehorse House....."

With disgusting eyes, Darius looks at Ariel and Tris while licking.

"And, there is something I wish to say."

Darius laughs.

"Oh dear! The other day, Miss Tristina from Purplehorse House had been discovered."

"Discovered?"

Ariel tilted her head.

"Everyone also remembers about the operation in the Royal Capital earlier this year. The roundup of the bandits that plagued the Royal Capital. At that time, she was found. Miss Tristina's corpse."

"!?"

A month before.

So that means he was ready.

"Of course, it seemed to have been washed away in the city already, so it's difficult to authenticate someone with the ring. But, on Tristina's body, there is a characteristic known only by her family. The feature is, on the chest..... she has a birthmark in the shape of

a crescent moon."

That is a lie.

That shouldn't be the case.

There is no such birthmark on Tristina.

There shouldn't be.

At least, that what I thought when I saw her in a more revealing outfit.

"Isn't that right? The current family head of the Purplehorse House, Freitas Purplehorse-dono? "

But even if it's a lie, there is no way to confirm it.

Now the Purplehorse family head is speaking to Ariel, to confirm it.

If Tris is instructed to show the birthmark, there wouldn't be anything there.

What are you going to do.

Ariel.

Do you have another card up your sleeve?

Such as giving her seven wounds on chest beforehand ^[2]

Although she's still composed, I wonder if she's flustered on the inside.

"....."

The figurehead of the Purplehorse House stood up.

If I look closely, his face indeed resembles Tris's.

His figure is shaking and he's twitching at the edge of his mouth, slightly different to the vixen that is Tris-ane.

"So, Freitas Purplehorse-dono. Did you not confirm her corpse. Tristina is no longer missing, but confirmed dead. "

Darius smiled while whispering like a devil.

"Therefore, declare that the woman standing here is a fake Tristina.

Could you say that? In order to let this nonsense end. If you don't, then there will be no choice but to command a lady to bare her skin in front of this many people."

Darius's composure

Ariel's smile.

The shivering Freitas.

An intense atmosphere flows through the venue.

Even by just watching, my mouth has dried up.

"M, my daughter"

Freitas opened his mouth slowly.

"My daughter was stolen from me by Senior Minister Darius..... "

"Freitas-dono! What!?"

"The one standing there is definitely my daughter Tristina! Ariel-sama, bring judgment down on Senior Minister Darius who kidnapped, confined, and disgraced my daughter!"

Darius rises.

"Don't speak nonsense, Freitas! You should have it! The sealed contract for the sake of confirming her identity!"

"Darius-sama. Something like that does not exist."

"...!"

Ariel is giving a small smile.

Oh, I see.

That's right.

I should have known.

Ariel has already contacted the Purplehorse family.

Anticipating Darius' plan, and taking a step ahead.

I want to learn from her in that regard.

"Well, Senior Minister Darius.

.....What was said by the Purplehorse family head is a matter of fact "

Somehow, Ariel's smile also seems indecent.

"Kidnapping, imprisonment, and humiliating children of nobles.....

As stated by the King, a crime is a crime. You won't escape from your sin. You'll be judged under the Law of the Kingdom."

Darius' face distorts.

It is distorting in ugliness, overlooking the surrounding enemies.

At this point, Darius no longer has any allies in this place.

If you're cornered to this point, all that remains is to fall.

Although, if someone speaks out for Darius, he might survive.

However, those who speak for him will automatically become his accomplice, that's likely what most thought.

Most likely.

In the current situation, even with Darius gone, the First Prince Grabell's victory remains high.

While Ariel was away, Grabell had consolidated his support.

Right now, Darius is only a hindrance to him.

In the future, he will be a nuisance.

So, it's the end of Darius.

Ariel has won against Darius.

Even without doing anything, Darius will be ostracized by the other nobles.

Even if it went unresolved in court.

If there is dirt on Darius, the nobles would no doubt bring him down.

But in this place, against the trouble of losing Darius, one person spoke.

Darius is someone with a strong political ability above others.

"It's a surprisingly noisy party."

As if he had chosen to appear at a suitable time.

That man appeared.

With a no-nonsense face, a middle-aged blonde prince.

First Prince Grabell.

He walks towards the best seat in the room, and glares coldly at Ariel.

Second round begins.

Pat 3

Grabell Zafin Asura.

He moves straight towards Ariel.

"Ariel, what are you doing? Causing such huge commotion when Father is still sick?"

"What commotion ... I did nothing except protect the honor of the royal family."

"If that is the case, then think about the time and place."

Grabell shook his head while frowning.

"Now that Father has fallen ill, without Darius' skills what will become

of Asura Kingdom?"

"Even so, a crime is still a crime."

"Even then, it's between Senior Minister Darius and the middle-ranked Purplehorse nobles. I shouldn't have to tell you that there are more important business the kingdom must attend to. "

Speaking about social standings so openly.

In my previous life, cries over fairness and condemnation would be heard, but this is the Asura Kingdom.

Social status is part of life, so the people of this world accepts it.

"Yes, of course brother. But I will still repeat it again, a crime is a crime. If no one passes judgement, the kingdom would fall in decline. "

"Crime huh..... ? Indeed. Indeed, That's right. But Ariel. There are many people in this place who ought to have their crimes exposed and receive punishment like that. I wonder, do you intend to punish all of them? "

"Yes, of course. If it's necessary."

She's implicitly saying [If it's unnecessary to me, I won't punish crimes.]

If this spreads, the Asura Kingdom will rot enough for the smell to linger.

"I think your judgment against Darius is unnecessary, however you say that it is necessary."

Grabell laughs scornfully and directs a composed smile to Ariel.

"Looks like we won't be able to come to an agreement on this."

"That's right."

Grabell shook his head and sighed.

He looked over the surroundings.

"There will be no conclusion if we're debating with only two people. Until we settle this matter, Senior Minister Darius will remain troubled by this... "

And, Grabell is overlooking the surroundings.

How will things proceed, I wonder.

"In accordance with normal conventions, these things are usually decided by majority votes. Since you have put so much effort in gathering most of the stalwarts of this country. Why not let them decide who is right, Ariel or I?"

Democracy

When there is no other way, it will come to that.

He is asking the nobles around.

Go to Ariel's side, or stick to Grabell.

Yet, he thinks either way he will win.

With this, he also wants to confirm.

To confirm the allegiance of each nobles.

Thus, if you're the enemy, you will be purged.

"....."

The nobles were not in turmoil or anything.

They've thought that someday this moment will eventually come, in the near future as well.

Or maybe it has already happened once between the First Prince Grabell and the Second Prince Halfaus.

Regardless.

The nobles have to decide.

Now, in this place, you can either go to Ariel's side, or you can join Grabell.

It is not a place where they could keep their allegiance a secret.

They will choose who to support face to face.

Looking at the situation of this opportunity to make a decision.

Darius sank.

For Grabell's Faction, it is a big blow.

However.

For the Grabell Faction, a number of influential people still remain.

Two of the four great local lords, Notus and Boreas.

Besides them, several upper nobles are aligned with Grabell.

If you look at the strength ratio, Grabell will most likely win.

"Very well, brother. But, before that, I would like to introduce one more person to everyone."

"What?"

Ariel sent a signal with the snap of her fingers.

To servant Elmore, who was outside at the terrace, that in turn sends a signal using the ring.

The next moment.

Along with a roar, a pillar of fire rose up from one corner of the castle.

Intermediate fire magic 『Flame Pillar』.

While scorching the walls of the castle, the flame that has been amplified to maximum power with chantless magic rose towards heaven.

It goes without saying that was Sylphy's doing.

"What...Ooo!?"

".....!"

"No way... !"

The nobles saw the fire go up.

But, they weren't surprised at it.

Because magic at this level can be seen as much as you like in the royal capital.

What they saw was behind it.

There was something which you could definitely not see as much as you wanted in the capital.

Lit by the flame pillar, floating in the night sky.

Is a huge shadow.

"The Sky Castle!?"

"..... When did it get so close!?"

The Sky Castle, Chaos Breaker.

A majestic castle steadily approaches at a steady speed which inspired fear.

Flying so low that you might think it would collide.

All of the aristocracy trembled when they gaze out the window.

It stopped.

Just above.

Directly above the Royal Castle Silver Palace, the air fortress stopped.

"....."

Silence.

Even so, I wonder how Perugia will descend.

No way There's no way he'll jump from that height.

No, come to think of it, he knows how to perform teleport and summoning magic.

If it's simply to teleport below, he can do it.

"No way..... Did he come" "

"....."

"That, no, but...."

And, someone muttered.

With looks of excitement on the nobles, forgetting the earlier tension, they were looking out the window.

Servant Elmore stands in front of the door squatting.

Or not a seat of honor.

Although some nobles wonder, nobody is able to answer the question.

Before long, footsteps can be heard.

The footsteps of a single man.

But among the entourage of escorts of the nobles, some have detected more than one presence.

13 in all.

Those that realize this begin to tremble.

Just like in the legend.

The footsteps, stopped in front of the door.

"He has arrived."

With Elmore's word, some gasped.

Then, the door is opened.

The air in the room changed.

".....!"

Wearing a white cloak, a silver-haired, golden eyed man appears.

His appearance is slightly different from his portrait, but with the overwhelming presence, that person has appeared.

He led 12 attendants.

Horror, fear, respect, and longing.

While receiving a variety of feelings, he proceeded into the venue.

And, going to the place of Ariel and Grabell.

The 12 Familiars split into two teams consisting of six, they moved to the end of the hall.

Group one is standing in escort of Ariel.

and the other stands as escort of Darius, next to Auber.

Sylvaril, who has changed her dress, comes next to me.

I can't tell by looking at her mask, but today she looks like she's in a good mood.

"I'm very pleased with your invitation today. Ariel Anemoi Asura. Have I arrived a bit late?"

"No, there is a saying that the main actor always comes late."

Perugius laughed happily.

Ariel also put on a big smile.

Grabell is taken aback.

And looking up at the tall Perugius, his eyes widen.

"Everybody, let me introduce him. One of the 『Three Heroes Who Defeated Laplace』, he is the 『Armored Dragon King』, Perugius Dola-sama."

Perugius did not bow and sends a glance at the surrounding.

The surrounding nobles stand up in panic, kneel, and bow.

"I am Perugius Dola."

Almost like a caricature, with behavior befitting of a king.

Perugius is great.

Possibly more so than the current king...

Enough to make you think so.

"Well, everyone. Raise your head. Tonight, I am just a guest. Although for a brief time, we'll be sitting beside one another. There is no need to humble yourselves so much."

Hearing his command, the nobles still in a daze, return to their seats.

At that point, Perugius raised his voice, saying [What's this?]

Among the seats reserved for the nobles, there are three vacancies.

Three lined up starting from the seat of honor.

Three people standing up.

Ariel, Grabell, and Perugius.

"Ooh, this is confounding. There are three empty seats. Well, Ariel Anemoi Asura. Grabell Zafin Asura. Where would it be best for me to sit?"

".....!"

Grabell has his breath taken away.

Voices like the nobles swallowing their saliva can be heard.

This is a farce.

Not just me, everyone knows.

Who Perugius called out to.

With this timing, he called out to them.

"That is... of course... please sit at the highest ranking seat."

Grabell said so in a trembling voice.

He could not help but say so.

He is choked by Perugius' presence.

Even though Perugius does not have the power to choose the king.

Even though Perugius does not have the power to decide the seating.

Why would they need to yield to him?

People with the composure to point that out had originally been in this place...

But they weren't here now.

They existed in a physical sense, but thinking of their own positions, they hesitated to open their mouths.

The nobles had noticed.

Why Darius has been accused immediately before this farce.

Perugius said.

Without being interrupted by anyone.

"No. I have been away from this country for too long. I can't allow myself to steal the seat of the king of the next generation."

Perugius pushed Ariel's back.

While being referred to as the king of the next generation, he pushed Ariel forward.

"Ariel. You will take that seat. I'll allow myself to sit adjacent to you."

At that time, the nobles who are in this venue has realized it.

The king of the next generation would be Ariel.

Part 4

Ariel is victorious.

I suppressed Auber,

She suppressed Luke on her own,

We suppressed Darius using Tris,

We suppressed Grabell using Perugius.

Well, her fight will continue a little more now, but the momentum flows her way.

Grabell and Darius have nothing stronger than Perugius.

They don't, that is.

"..... Perugius-sama!"

The moment Sylvaril cried.

The ceiling fell down.

Caught up in the chandelier, one of the nobles was crushed.

In the scattered rubble, some of the nobility got injured.

The damage wasn't huge.

Destroying the center of the table, the ceiling fell.

No.

It wasn't the ceiling.

What fell was a single human.

She smashed through the ceiling and fell.

A small body and skin with deep wrinkles.

She stabbed a beautiful golden sword into the ground like a cane.

That old woman stood up.

"Whew, so it's just as my dream foretold..."

She murmurs.

She landed in the [Field].

Then, by looking down around, she said.

"Come on, I've come to help you."

Water God Reida Ryia.

Toward Darius, she said that.

Hitogami's trump card has appeared.

Notes

1. Thomas and Friends reference
2. TN: Female Kenshiro

Chapter 185 - Rudeus' Battlefield

Part 1

The Water God Style has five secret arts.

The Water God Style founder is the one who created the strongest secret arts.

If you can use three of those five moves, you would be considered as a [God] rank.

Throughout the history of the Water God Style, there were individuals who had mastered four of them, but.....

Only the first generation [God] rank mastered all five of the Water God Style's secret arts.

Water God Reida Ryia was one such individual having mastered three of the secret arts.

She is an old woman.

Her prime is long past, her abilities are degrading with age.

Regarding this, there is a bit of uncertainty.

About why has she retained the title of Water God.

She was chosen for teaching swordsmanship in the Asura Kingdom for many years.

She has not named a successor even after a dozen years.

Why does she continue bearing the title of the [God] rank of Water God Style?

Is it because she has exceptional talent?

That much is true.

The Water God Reidia is unmistakably a genius.

Enough not to be inferior to any of history's Water Gods.

But, be that as it may, she doesn't have so much talent that she'd win over old age.

So is it that there's no other talent left?

That's not the case.

Currently, there are several individuals who have mastered three of the secret arts of the Water God Style.

But why didn't those few consider taking over Reidia's burden as [God] rank in Water God Style.

[They weren't suitable for that], said one with [Emperor] rank in Water God Style, entrusting that position to Reidia.

Why?

That's because Water God Reidia used the two most difficult of the five secret arts.

By combining those two mystic arts, a phantom art is created, which could be called a sixth secret art.

『Deprivation Sword Kingdom』

She strikes from a single stance, be it a swing striking down, up, left or right.

From where she is, it's possible for her to kill all of her opponents in every direction.

If anyone moves even a step, she will respond to that movement, capable of cutting down everything.

Part 2

"Nobody moves. I want to avoid this if possible."

Perugius' subordinate, Arumanfi of the Bright, moved as soon as Reida had appeared.

He was behind Reida in an instant and was sheared in half in the next moment.

He did not leave a corpse, but disappeared in particles of light.

Then Perugius' underling Trophimus of the Wave also moved.

He points his hand towards Reida, as if to fire off something.

Looks like he will.

But Reida only tilted her sword slightly for just an instant and Trophimus was sheared in half.

He too disappeared, becoming particles of light.

Next, she moved to me and sliced off my wrist the moment I sent magic power to the ring I was wearing.

No, it only seemed to have been cut off.

What I lost was the wrist of my prosthetic hand.

My left hand is alive and well.

But, looking at my hand that abruptly disappeared, I couldn't help but shudder.

The next one that moved was a senior noble.

In an attempt to escape by himself, his leg's tendon was sliced as a result.

He let out a scream before collapsing from the strike.

It was a strike with the back of the sword.

None of the guards were able to move.

Neither Eris who is prone to strike first, nor Ghyslaine.

Ariel, Perugia and his subordinates, as well as myself had all been nailed down by Reida.

Everyone in the room was aware that they were in Reida's range.

They understood that if they took action, it would result in an instant death.

".....It doesn't seem that anyone dares to move. Well, Auber."

When Auber was called, he was stiff.

Even a swordsman of his level, cannot escape from Reida's pressure.

"W, why are you here.....? "

"Ariel, Perugia.....and Quagmire, right. Hurry up and take their necks."

Auber alone was able to move.

He sent a puzzled look to Reida.

"M-Me?"

"That's right. Who else will do it? "

"But "

At that point, Auber glanced at Eris.

Looking at it with a sidelong glance, Reida spat with still eyes.

"It is no good that Eris is among the enemies, huh. Whether the attack in the forest, or on the street at night, you did a half-hearted job. Even a coward like you wants to act swordsman-like in front of your disciple."

Everyone held their position while Reida was badmouthing them.

"Why do you think you were hired for such a high price?"

Is it so you could just take the money using your prestige as a North

Emperor, lose two of your disciples, and watch your employer die without being able to do anything?"

"

"Weren't you a more underhanded person?"

".....Yeah."

Auber made his move.

With a sword in the right hand, he joined the party.

Heading toward Ariel's direction.

This is bad.

I have do to something.

I can't move.

What should I do.

This is one of Hitogami's pawns.

With only one [God] rank from Water God style, this happens.

I had heard of the counter for the Water God style from Orsted.

I listened to his explanation carefully.

It's to [Take action so that it doesn't come to this.]

Run away out of their sight before you see the Water God style, then take a stance.

Either behind or ahead of them is fine; even above or below works.

Run away while you still can.

Even though I was told that.

It has come to this situation.

" ... Na! This! "

Suddenly, the security of the castle entered the room.

Knights in armor.

No, that silvery armor apprentice knights?

"P-Put away your sword! "

"Don't move! "

Reida's shout stopped the Knight apprentices.

However, there was one apprentice who didn't listen, proceeding further in.

Walking a few steps in this pressure, that person removed her helmet.

Emerging from under the helmet was the face of someone I'm familiar with.

Water King Isolte Cruel.

Why is she here?

There shouldn't be a single knight guarding the castle today.

Is this Darius's doing?

In anticipation of such a situation, did he station the apprentice knight?

Or was this just a coincidence ?

"Honored Master, what on earth is going on here? "

"Oh, is it Isolte....?"

"Using the secret arts at a place like this.....!"

"Yeah, yeah, I'll explain. Today, Water God Reida and North Emperor Auber shall begin their rampage."

"Ram..... page? "

While Isolte frowns upon hearing that, Reida continues her words.

"Let's see..... Both of us here had conspired with the Kingdom of the Dragon King.

Blinded by huge amounts of gold, we tried to assassinate officials of the kingdom.

Ariel is brutally murdered, then the murderers are killed by an apprentice knight who was present at the time by some chance.

Isolte Cruel becomes a hero, and Water God Style survives."

Starting with a laugh, Reida saw the first prince.

"Yeah, isn't it a good plot? I should've become a writer..... Make it happen like that, Grabell boy."

"Did I just hear something stupid, esteemed master..... ! "

Trying to step forward, Isolte's legs are stopped.

Perhaps in Reida's excitement, she caught Isolte in her area of attack.

" Hurry, Auber."

" "

"What? Are you worried that the North God Style will lose its social status? Don't screw with me, I'm cleaning up your mess! It's too late to step down now, calm yourself."

Auber shook his head.

He picks up his sword, and turns around to Ariel.

But, he shakes his head in hesitation.

He is at a loss.

"What are you doing, Auber! Kill Ariel now! And that whore over there as well!"

Darius' cry resounded.

He also included Tris.

For Darius, it's not only Ariel's death that is desirable.

If evidence remains, even after Grabell becomes king, he might still be in trouble.

"Don't worry about what happens later! I'll do something about it!"

Hearing the cry of Darius, Auber seems to have regained his resolve.

Looking a little bit different, he continues walking to Ariel's direction.

Oh, this is bad.

This situation.

Is it already checkmate?

"Chi..... "

Eris is trying to move.

For better or for worse, she tries to escape Reida's barrier.

"Eris, it's useless "

"But. "

"Please, stop it."

"Then, what do we do.....?"

I do not want to see a situation where Eris dies.

But what will I do?

What should I do?

I do not know.

What if we move all at once?

No, that's no good.

It's not a skill that could be broken so easily.

I assume, regardless, we're too far apart to coordinate the attack.

What about Perugia?

He has not moved since earlier.

No, he's looking at me with a bored face.

A face that seems to say, [What are you going to do about this situation?]

Even though his two subordinates are dead, he doesn't look agitated at all.

Could he have something in store?

Or is he relying on something?

No, there is no such free time.

Auber is trying to kill Ariel right now.

No choice.

There is no choice but to move.

I will attack both Reida and Auber at the same time.

I will use『Electric』magic.

I will be injuring the surrounding people near me.

It might not be able to completely defeat them, and I might also get incapacitated if I use lightning.

Plus, Water God Style can evade even magic. The success rate is low.....

"Rudeus..... Let's do it. "

Seeming to have noticed my finger's movement, Eris gave me a signal with her eyes.

We'll die together.....

Sylphy, please pick up my bones later.

"!"

And, at that time.

A jolt passed through the core of my being.

"T, This is ... !"

Auber's body starts to tremble and stops moving.

Reida's forehead starts to sweat profusely.

No, it is not just those two people.

In this place, most people have begun to tremble and jerk their bodies.

Even though the world stopped moving from Reida's pressure, their faces turn pale and shiver.

So he noticed.

Ah, thank goodness....

From the ring a little while ago, magic seems to have properly gone through.

"Damn it, I give up..... Darius, I wasted too much time talking....."

"W, What? What's, going on!? This cold air.....!"

"Change of plan. Auber, it's bad but can you take Darius and flee from this place right now?"

Auber is puzzled at Reida's words.

"Why Darius..... instead of First Prince Grabell? "

"Ma, even an old lady like me won't forget her debt. "

Reida laughed thinly.

"Hurry! At this rate, regardless of friend or foe, everyone will die!"

At her words, Auber thought for a moment, then nodded.

Grasping Darius's arms, he dragged his heavy body, taking him away.

"This way."

"Hu, Yea..... "

Auber fled in a direction differing from the entrance the apprentice knights came from.

No one can stop them.

Tied down by Reida, I cannot move at all.

"

Silence envelops the area.

"Whew. How far can they escape? If I knew about this earlier, then perhaps I wouldn't have come...."

".....Why?"

Someone asked this question.

It was Ariel.

Even in the face of death, her complexion hadn't changed.

She seems to question why Reida is helping Darius.

I also have doubts in that regard.

"Everyone's noisily asking [Why, why]. Come on, this isn't something unusual."

Reida has a pleasant look.

"It's a story of when an old woman was just a young girl.

Praised as a genius, the ecstatic girl beat up a noble of the same age at a dojo... and received retribution after.

Outnumbered and surrounded by a crowd, she was knocked down in an instant.

Just when she was about to have both her hands--the life of a swordswoman--cut off, and turned into a daruma, she was rescued.

By a single noble boy who was higher ranked than those nobles."

..... What?

It was Darius?

"She became a Water King and was selected to work as a fencing instructor.

When she tried to give her thanks then, he'd become a fat and sly man with a twisted character.

He didn't remember me, either."

...

"I sure felt let down.

After all, I'd thought that even if his face was bad, he was a boy with a straightforward, righteous character.

[Maybe, if I could meet that person]... I've even thought some maiden-like things."

Reida has a distant look in her eyes.

Remembering the illusion that she thinks she can now move on from.

"Well, it was an end to the girl's first love..... But well, I didn't resent that, I just needed to repay my life's favor."

Reida said.

In few short words, in such a short time.

A confession towards no one in particular.

"Honestly, I also had forgotten about it.

But, on the way back to Asura, there was a sudden revelation in my dream.

If I came back to the royal palace as a Water God Style instructor, I could return the favor of that time."

So it was Hitogami.

And now, a man opposing Hitogami is coming towards us.

While, unfortunately, his presence poured overwhelmingly, one man is running through the castle at great speed.

Auber will probably run in the opposite direction of that man.

They do not have the power to detect his presence, but he understood somehow.

Auber is a person sensitive to such signs.

"It's funny. Even though he had completely forgotten about it long ago."

"

"But at this age, it no longer matters anymore. By removing the feeling of love, it becomes a whole new feeling. It becomes a feeling to repay the kindness of a lifetime."

Then Reida opens her eyes.

" He seems to have arrived."

The front door opened.

A lone man entered.

"Hi!?"

Everyone is overcome with fear from seeing his figure.

Some leaked, while others collapsed on the floor.

There are those who are hostile too.

However, everyone here holds a similar thought.

『I'll be killed.』

Silvery hair and golden eyes.

A lone man with a dangerous, frightening face.

Orsted stood there.

"Long time no see. Did you come to perform the final rites for this old lady's short remaining life? "

"That's right. Because you're an apostle of Hitogami."

"Apostle, huh... So you let me go the previous time because I wasn't one then? My my, in my last moments I'm going to have to fight an unbelievable opponent.."

Locking gazes, Orsted approached Reida in a straight line.

There was no hesitation.

"『Deprivation Sword Kingdom』"

Reida's body blurred.

Her sword was never at a fixed location.

Every time Orsted took a step, golden flickers flew out from the sword.

With sword flickers leaving an afterimage, Reida and Orsted are tied with a thread of gold.

All sword flickers has been defended against.

Sparks are scattered around Orsted.

He repelled those sword blows with his bare hands.

One step, two steps, three steps.

The number of sparks increase with each step.

Orsted still does not stop.

He reached the front of Reida's eyes in no time.

"Die."

And all too soon.

Very anticlimactically, Reida's chest had been penetrated.

By Orsted's transparent hand, Reida is run through.

She was discarded like a rag.

" G-Grandmaaa! ! "

Isolte cried, and the killing intent vanished.

But, as if time stood still, no one made a move.

What just happened? No one understands it.

Only fear dominates this place.

Everyone thinking that they would be the next to die.

The first one to move is Isolte.

She drew her sword and took a stance against Orsted with trembling legs.

"How dare you, the esteemed master.....! "

"....."

As if nothing had happened, Orsted moves towards the terrace.

Isolte starts running after him to the terrace.

"Rudeus-sama! "

Cried Ariel when she came to.

"Please chase after Auber and Darius! They must not escape!"

Following Ariel's roared phrase, time began to move again.

Selfish nobles started to flee with their escorts in tow.

Three people. Ghyslaine, Eris, and I ran out of the room and chased after Darius.

"Ru, Rudi? What happened?"

Sylphy came over as well.

She doesn't seem to grasp the situation.

What should I do, bring her along?

No, Isolte is still in the room.

She is looking down from the terrace outside while being stunned.

She seems to have given up on chasing Orsted....

"Sylphy, guard Ariel-sama! Be careful of Isolte! We will chase Darius!"

"Okay!"

I leave Sylphy and Luke to protect Ariel.

With that last minute judgement, we gave chase.

Part 3

It is uncertain why Ariel screamed [Chase Darius!]

Maybe it was just in the spur of the moment?

Don't let Darius get away!

I wonder if it's because of the old woman's tale?

Ariel must have another reason for me to chase Darius.

She's also a Dragon's dog like me.

Maybe her reason is simply: [Don't let Hitogami's apostle Darius get away.]

Kill Darius.

It's decided that I must do this.

"This way! "

In accordance with Ghyslaine's nose, we run down the hallway.

Ghyslaine and Eris have no doubt whatsoever in Ariel's words.

Chasing after a fleeing enemy, they wear stifled smiles.

Feeling the adrenaline, I run down the hall steadily.

Security is low.

It's not entirely absent, but they seem to be after someone else.

A voice saying, [He fled towards the Royal Palace!] can be heard.

Perhaps they are after Orsted.

" ... I saw them! "

With no disturbances, we easily caught up to them after a few minutes.

Darius, with his huge body, was being carried by Auber.

Heavy wheezing can be heard as they rush down the corridor.

" Tch! "

Looking back with a sharp glance, Auber clicks his tongue.

He supports Darius's shoulder, and flees into a nearby room.

We immediately rush in after... and suddenly come to a stop.

Darius catches his breath, while Auber with his unsheathed sword is facing us.

".....Ku, Ku! "

Writhingly Darius glares at me.

"Agh, why did something so stupid have to happen? This is strange, too strange."

"Darius-dono, you have lived a long life, so you should have experienced this type of thing before. How about calming down and using your head to get us out of this situation? "

Auber replied To Darius's cry.

"I did as God said! I shouldn't have been cornered like this! "

Darius refutes with a red face.

" My my, so you're a religious guy. Then at least calm your breathing and pray for my victory."

While scratching his cheek, Auber took up his swords with a helpless look.

Before us, he brandishes his swords head on for the first time.

And he introduces himself.

"『North Emperor』 Auber Corvette."

To that challenge, Ghyslaine and Eris quickly ready their swords.

"『Sword King』 Eris Greyrat."

"『Sword King』 Ghyslaine Dedorudia."

Should I also introduce myself?

While I hesitated, Darius pointed his finger at Eris.

"The one with red hair! Boreas! It's you! You're a Boreas Greyrat! "

Eris bit her lips and frowned blatantly.

"..... That has changed."

" I! I have provided various help for Boreas's needs!"

Darius didn't hear Eris's reply and shouted while spitting out his saliva.

"Even with Fedoa territory's disappearance, I helped them with gold!"

..... Come to think of it.

Darius provided the capital to fund the Fedoa Region Search Group,

right?

Although I heard talk that there was an ulterior motive.

Being caught off guard, this part of me is a little weak.

Ulterior motives of investors aside, many people were still saved by it.

"That's irrelevant to me!"

Eris spit out her words harshly.

She is smart.

"J-James also received my help!"

James.

The current head of Boreas, Eris's uncle.

"Installing him as Boreas family head, and preventing him from being crushed by the all-out attack from nobles is also due to my help! "

It's a completely different matter.

"Because of that, the reconstruction of the Fedoa territory is also going well!"

No, no, that's a lie.

"I've seen it on the way to the Royal Capital, but reconstruction of Fedoa territory isn't advancing at all."

"Don't listen to that youngster! If Boreas had completely collapsed, other lords would have sold the Fedoa territory bit by bit and abandoned it!"

Putting it in that way it sounds convincing.

Was that really the case?

The reconstruction has not been going well is a fact.

But were the alternatives any better?

"If that's the case, you should've helped old man Sauros..."

Coming out clearly from my mouth, were those words.

At that, Darius's complexion changed dramatically.

"Sauros? Don't talk about that idiot, that toothless lion could never grasp the reality of the situation! That man tried to use the entire Boreas fortune to reconstruct Fedoa Region without thinking about the consequences!"

"

I think that's a manly choice ... but.

Well, you can definitely call it a bad move.

The Boreas House is falling prey to other lords now, after all.

"I saved James who came crying to me! I killed Sauros who was forcibly advancing things, and made sure that James would become the head! The Boreas House and Fedoa territory still exist. This was all possible due to my help! So help me! Please overlook this!"

Aa.....

That's not good.

Saying such things about the late Sauros.

I think these two people may no longer be stopped.

"In other words, you're Sauros-ojiisama's enemy."

"I see, so that's how it is."

At Eris's words, Ghyslaine nods, they take up their swords and bare their fangs.

"Then, I'll kill you."

"Hiiii!"

Darius gives out a short scream.

Auber sighed.

"I guess that means negotiations have failed."

Thus, the final round begins.

Part 4

"Fu~u Fu~u..... "

Has Darius collected himself?

He sat on the nearest chair taking deep breaths.

His shout just now is starting to look like a lie, with his calm looking attitude.

"Auber, can you win?"

"Well, it would be better if it was just the two Sword Kings, but that magician is troublesome."

With his back to Darius, Auber is pointing a sword in my direction.

He looks... settled down, I guess?

However, his eyes are not focused.

He's looking and moving restlessly, is that a feint?

"..... I know. The God also said so."

"God did?"

"That a mage in gray colored robe will come and kill me. I did as I was told; I destroyed all the magic teleportation circles in the area and had you withdraw to the capital, however this is the result. I won't believe in him anymore."

Following Hitogami's orders, he moved about secretly, doing this and that.

Like Orsted said, chess seems to be a weak point of Hitogami.

Maybe he just doesn't like playing a two player game.

"Do something. That's why I hired you. Your speciality is fighting while being outnumbered, isn't it?"

"Understood.....If by any chance I win I will get a special reward, right?"

"Oh yes, that's right! I promise!"

——After that exchange, Auber was facing us.

He squared his shoulders against his opponents.

Seeing this, Eris and Ghyslaine straighten up.

"North God style.....『Red Ink』"

"Gaaaaaaaaa! "

"Uraaaaaaaa! "

The moment Auber muttered that, Eris and Ghyslaine reacted.

But at that time, I already understood the meaning of 『Red Ink』.

I had heard from Orsted what kind of skill it was.

Ground.

A red carpet was laid on the floor.

Also, a red ball was scattered beforehand without anyone realizing it.

By the time we noticed it, it was too late.

"This is!"

"Nu!? "

At the feet of Ghyslaine and Eris, a big pop “Pa~an” resounded.

Spreading under their feet, strong liquid adhesive was strewn, sticking the soles of the two to the carpet.

This ball was developed by a certain North Saint pharmacist, an instant adhesive.

Since the process is complex, I don't really remember how to make it.

The impact causes the ball to rupture scattering the contents around.

The strong adhesive kept Ghyslaine's and Eris's legs stuck to the carpet.

"『Water Flow』!"

Using water magic, I washed off the adhesive on their feet.

It is weak to water and loses its suction the moment it's exposed to moisture.

But, Eris and Ghyslaine's stance had already been messed up.

Too unsteady for their kill moves, but with their well trained legs they still never-the-less managed to strike.

Too slow.

Auber has already started his next move.

He immediately moves between Ghyslaine and Eris.

Ghyslaine's sword stops.

Eris's sword stops.

They're taught in Sword God Style, to never release a Sword of Light with allies in the way.

"First thing's first, you. Rudeus Greyrat."

Auber's target isn't Ghyslaine or even Eris.

It was me.

<Two swords with both hands are swung down to me.>

I see it.

Thanks to the simulated training with Eris, my foreseeing eye has caught Auber's sword properly.

Immediately, I moved the artificial hand into the sword's trajectory.

First move.

I guard another by using the art of 『Earth Shield』with the right hand .

"North God Style secret art.....『Oboro Cross 』!"

<Auber's hand is blurred.>

Auber threw his sword into the air, lowered his upper body, and reached for the sword remaining at his waist.

I see that.

The foreseeing eye has caught the movement.

To cover my right side, an『Earth Shield』 shaped like a buckler has already formed.

This shield made to parry Auber's slashing power is heavy and very hard.

It's so heavy that my hand's movements are limited.

Auber's sword is already under my left hand.

It's a heavy prosthetic hand made of high magic, there is nothing beyond the wrist, but it manages to receive Auber's sword slash directly .

Auber tries to draw another sword while making a turning fall.

The strike can't be avoided.

Even if there was a way, there is not enough time to do that.

I decided to take a risk.

I jumped and moved my bent knee at him. Auber's sword was received by my left foot.

Something hot sears my shin.

When I landed, my left foot felt like it had been squashed and bent.

If you take a look at the area right below the knee of my left leg, it is dangling by a flap of skin.

Pain came later.

"Iii! "

I withstand the pain by clenching down on my teeth.

I confirm my surroundings

Eris is moving, Ghyslaine's also looking back, I'm standing here.

I'm not dead.

Auber, enclosed by three people, cannot escape.

".....?"

Just then, something caught my attention

What now, is Auber trying to use strange ninjutsu again?

That's not it.

Something moves at the edge of my vision.

It's Darius, pointing his right hand in our direction.

"Spirit of fire, everywhere between the sky and earth, I request for your protection -

Divine protection of the great fire spirit in the place where the demand of thee—— "

Ghyslaine and Eris noticed it.

The actions taken by the two women were almost completely opposite.

Eris faces Darius, to stand between Darius and me, while Ghyslaine approaches Auber.

"——『Fire Bullet』."

From Darius' hand, a mass of fire is released.

Its power and speed, both unquestionably lethal, the fiery projectile was closing in.

"Fun..... Gu! "

Eris cut the fireball in half.

But, before anyone could notice.

Auber's kunai-like dagger had been thrown, penetrating her side.

My vision returns to the present.

Auber, still retaining the posture of throwing a dagger at Eris, had received Ghyslaine's sword.

No, it wasn't received; Ghyslaine's sword had cut into Auber's shoulder.

He had not completely parried the blow.

His sword broke and he was thus cut

However, only shallowly.

It did not sever his arm.

"Fu! "

"Gaaa ! "

Auber flew to the back while back flipping,

Eris lay in wait at his landing point, launching a killing attack.

But, probably because of the Kunai in her side, Auber evaded it easily.

"

This is bad; He's put distance between us.

I don't know what went wrong, to confront Auber from a distance is bad.

Why is it bad?

That guy has a variety of skills.

Not only that.

My leg was sliced and I doubt Eris can run either.

Now, supposing Auber runs away with Darius.

Then it will become Ghyslaine alone.

That's right.

I have to do something to Darius.

While discarding the Earth Shield, I directed my staff at Darius.

"Stone Cannon! "

"!?"

"Oooaa!"

The bullet flew at a ridiculous speed, but it was received by Auber's sword.

However, this was within my predictions.

That shot just now was not a mere Stone Cannon.

"!?"

Right where it was hit.

The hollow point rock bullet which was cut into two explodes near Darius.

I had developed this hollow point rock bullet while traveling the Magic Continent.

The name is Explosive Stone Cannon.

"Gugyaaaaaa! "

Fragments of rock and shell penetrating his eye, Darius crouches while holding his face .

"Nuu?"

Auber's attention slipped.

"Daaaaaa! "

There, Eris immediately seized the opening.

Sword of Light.

".....!?"

Auber.....received it.

He caught it with the side of his blade, the thickest part of the sword.

But Eris' sword cuts through it like it's nothing, and her sword went into Auber's arm.

Too shallow.

Because of her injury, the technique was not perfect.

After slicing Auber's arm, Eris's sword failed to cut deeper.

"Gaaaaaa! "

After that, Ghyslaine moved.

Auber, lacking both his arms, tried to evade.

However, the Sword of Light is a difficult move to evade.

It's a killer move of the Sword God Style, after all.

Auber is in no position to avoid it.

It's not a move you can dodge without preparations.

Auber realizes this.

Currently, it is impossible.

Ghyslaine's perfect Sword of Light entered from around his shoulders and exited his side.

" Impressive."

While muttering that, Auber fell.

He collapses in a pool of his own blood.

His body twitched for a while, but the light in his eyes was gone.

..... He is dead.

" "

"Aaaaa, my eye, my eye! Auber, do something Auber!"

Still crouching, Darius was screaming while holding his eye.

Ghyslaine looks down at the crouching Darius who received my Explosive Stone Cannon.

" "

Ghyslaine swings her sword down in silence.

Blood sprayed even to my cheek.

Part 4

I left Darius's corpse there.

This is a prior arrangement with Ariel.

Regardless of how the murder took place, it's best to leave Darius' corpse behind if possible.

The possibility that Ariel is accused at a later time is also high, but...

It's more important to prove that Darius is dead.

This happy feeling over killing someone... bothers me.

"Fuu "

The unpleasant guy died.

I killed him.

The aftertaste is bad.

I did not deal the finishing blow directly, but it didn't matter.

Now, I actually felt it.

I am the one who killed Darius.

Killing Auber that tried to protect him, while crushing Darius's eye, rendering him defenseless.

It was not possible to feel it until now, but this time I felt it.

I do not know what is the difference.

Will it be a problem of distance.

I don't know.

"Huh "

I think that it's useless to mull over it.

Because this is a path I have chosen.

Then, going to the next room, my wounds were treated by using the King Class Healing Magic scroll that I got from Orsted.

As expected of King Class, even the severed foot was restored.

But, probably due to the thinning of my blood, my body is cold.

Next to me is Eris.

She is looking at my treatment with a blue face.

I pull her clothes off.

Such charming, well-trained ab muscles

"..... What? "

Her side's wound had turned purplish.

Poison.

Auber's dagger was coated in poison.

"..... "

I tried Elementary and Intermediate Detoxification.

Confirmed that they are not effective.

Cold sweat has run down at my back.

Suddenly, I remember Orsted's words.

Auber only uses one type of poison and it is non-lethal.

In addition, he also has the antidote.

Immediately returning to the room next door, Auber's corpse was scavenged to obtain the antidote.

Eris drank it, and spread some on her abdomen while she was at it.

As a precaution... I who received slashes also drank it.

It was dangerous.

If he had more powerful poison, Eris would probably already be dead.

I'm so glad, really.....

"You avoided his 『Oboro Cross』quite well....."

When treating Eris's side, she said clearly.

I wonder if can be considered avoiding

Well, I suppose you can given that it is not a mortal wound.

"It's thanks to the mock battles with Eris. Having become accustomed to fast attacks, I was somehow able to evade it. "

"But even I've never evaded it "

Saying so, Eris was giving a slightly lonely look.

Eris had been taught the way of sword by Auber.

Was she reminiscing?

"Oh well, that's fine."

Eris shook her head quickly.

Her character is enviable.

Anyway.

Ghyslaine, Eris and I are safe.

Total victory.

"Then, let's go back "

"Well."

"Ah."

We'll look at it as a triumph, I am allowed to feel triumphant.

Part 5

When we came back to the party venue, an unexpected sight befell my eyes.

".....Eh? "

Luke is pressing a dagger against Ariel's neck.

Philemon is kneeling and Sylphy is sending a hateful gaze in Luke's direction.

What kind of situation is this?

Luke glanced at me in confusion and opened his mouth.

Directing words not towards me, but towards Sylphy.

"If you want to help Ariel-sama, then kill Rudeus."

That question was directed towards Sylphy ——

Chapter 186 - Luke's Recklessness

Part 1

The party venue had regained its composure.

The people that remain in the venue, are mostly the major senior aristocracy and nobility of Asura Kingdom.

Greyrat, Bluewolf, Purplehorse, Whitespider, and Silvertoad. They're families that have served Asura Kingdom since eons ago.

In order to witness the 『Result』, they chose to remain in the venue instead of running away even after Orsted left the place.

Of course, the party didn't resume.

What happened so far is hard to ignore.

Darius's downfall and Perugius-sama's appearance.

With these two impacts, Ariel instilled a strong impression to nobility that she is the one who will become the next king.

Of course, regarding Orsted that appeared abruptly, made many of them puzzled with their own questions.

However since Ariel, the host of this venue, was calming them down, the other nobles that still remained began to relax.

"....."

The nobility felt a fear that penetrated through the depths of their hearts.

That man, whose body emitted fear, suddenly appeared and saved Ariel.

That man and Ariel are accomplices.

Thinking that, even the nobility will distrust Ariel.

At least that was what Rudeus had thought.

However, the actual situation is a little different.

The man appeared only for a moment, killed Reida, and left without even giving his name.

Thus, Orsted was dubbed 『Perugius's Underling』 in the eyes of the nobility.

After all, they share the same hair, eyes, and have similar appearances.

He reminded them of Perugius, who has the stature of a king.

Perugius has an underling who can beat the Water God in one blow.

Everyone there put their trust in Perugius.

Memories prior to that were forgotten.

(If you disobey, then you're the next victim)

With that thought, the nobles could only bow their heads to Ariel.

No one dared to pry further into the matter.

Ariel has returned to Asura.

Darius has fled, possibly already dead.

Ariel will kill all those who get in her way.

Everyone there thought so even the First Prince Grabell.

Orsted's curse wielded enough power to do so.

Everyone, except one.

Because he knows Ariel better than anyone else.

Because he has been informed of Orsted by Hitogami.

Because he, even after being persuaded by Ariel, still didn't fully trust Rudeus.

That person is Luke Notus Greyrat.

Luke was thinking.

Really, what good can come from an evil man like that; the man whom Rudeus calls boss.

Luke feels alarmed.

And what will become of someone who ascended with their help?

In this case, even Darius is still a better choice.

Hitogami came out in his dream.

Radiating a divine aura, its appearance can be called godlike,

He gave Luke advice, going into great detail.

What he must do in order for Ariel to become a King, and how Rudeus has been tempted by Evil.

Ariel had lectured him before.

His God is evil.

She said his advice will lead Luke into a trap, with himself gaining benefit from their fall.

Indeed, if you compared Hitogami's prophecies with how events actually unfolded, there were many lies.

No, rather than a lie, he should think it's his own mistake in many cases.

He himself misunderstood the advice and took a wrong step.

He feels that way.

Luke is Ariel's knight.

If his lord said so then he must believe her, more than the mysterious

God. He's going to believe in his lord.

Even in that matter, for example.

His duty is to follow his lord's path blindly, live together, and be ready to die together.

But when he came here, Luke was forced to recognize something.

Looking at Orsted, he was forced to recognize.

Luke only has good eyes regarding women.

On the other hand, he can't discern the true nature of man.

He's aware of it.

But, he still knows.

That Orsted is evil.

He is not someone whom you want to associate with.

He is a false god that will lead humans to their ruin.

Ariel is wrong.

And, Rudeus was probably fascinated by that false god.

He thought so.

Then...

(Then, what should I do?)

(When it's become clear that my lord is walking the wrong path, what should I do?)

State his opinion?

It would be nice.

But, to whom?

Orsted has already moved.

And he already gave his aid.

In this situation it can be said that Grabell and Darius are the losers, Ariel has taken the kingship.

Isn't it too late?

With my pitiful sword and magic skills, what can I do?

Even if I did something, will there be a meaning in that?

(I'm powerless.)

Just as Luke was about to give up.

One person suddenly entered his field of view.

Moving in front of Ariel quickly, that person performed a kowtow kneeling.

"Ariel-sama!"

Philemon Notus Greyrat.

Luke's father.

While giving a nasty smile, he lifted his voice to Ariel.

To be heard to the many surrounding nobles.

"Congratulations! This Philemon has awaited impatiently for this day for so long!"

Saying that in a feigned happiness, Philemon looked up at Ariel.

"In order to block Grabell's faction, I pretended to change sides.

Oh dear, now that I think of it, I really did not need to do that.

Ariel-sama truly. It seems you've grown quite mature in a foreign country!"

Although these might have been considered noble words, in the current situation they are the words of someone desperately clinging to their position.

He is the one, who in order to gain Grabell's trust, sent his own

soldiers to assassinate Ariel.

The other nobles saw Philemon with contemptuous eyes that said [How dare he say that now.]

"Philemon-sama"

"No, no, Ariel sama, you do not need to say it in front of everyone.

I had few allies, so my actions may seem like a stab in the back.

However, all that I have done was for Ariel-sama's sake.

Now that we're here, let's go back to the way we were.

I'll be the backing of Ariel-sama——"

Ariel did not let him finish.

"Philemon Notus Greyrat!"

Her roar drowned out Philemon's groveling.

"So what about your House!

So what about your position!

In regards to that betrayal, just state your true reason: because I was weak! "

Philemon wide-eyed, looking at Ariel.

This may be the first time Ariel shouted at Philemon in this way.

"However, have pride to the last minute if you betray one's ally. After having lost and reconciled, to even seek a position. Know shame!"

"Ha.....Hu..... "

Philemon looks around in shock, and starts stammering.

"Ah. I don't mean, no..."

Looking at Philemon's state, sounds of stifled laughter could be heard from the nobility.

Philemon was looking down with a bright red face.

But Ariel's anger hasn't subsided yet.

"I've already planned for your betrayal, so your house could survive.

I will give the position of family head to Luke, and you can retire in your territory,

I did not intend to pursue the matter any further!

But this!

You betrayed your ally, and yet after that you still tried to cuddle with the one you betrayed!

Such shameless action, even I am speechless!

I've already made the decision that I won't harm anyone, even the ones that didn't side by me! "

Philemon's face becomes pale.

"Apologize or face death!"

Hearing that, Luke realized that this was a farce.

From the beginning, Ariel had anticipated that it would become like this.

She may say this now, but he won't be executed.

The agreement with Ghyslaine was just verbal promise.

Ariel likely planned to spare Philemon.

For Ariel, Philemon was her strongest ally.

Although nowadays he's become somewhat weakened, it is no exaggeration to say that before they ran away to Ranoa, Ariel's faction revolved around Philemon.

He cannot be considered loyal, and yet...

Ariel was indebted to Philemon.

The one who made arrangements for Ariel to escape to the North was Philemon.

The one who provided assistance to Ariel was Philemon.

Ariel being alive now can be said is thanks to Philemon.

She won't forget that favor.

But, just because he was forgiven after the betrayal, he wants to come back again.

Allowing this would have a bad influence on Ariel's political activities in the future.

"Enough, if you don't retract what you just said, I can't hide what happened just now, thus execution.

Luke! Lend me your Sword! At the very least, I'll personally perform the last rite for him."

Listening to her words, Philemon saw Luke with a fearful look.

His eyes were begging for help.

Eyes focused on Luke.

Luke was lost in response to that gaze.

Part 2

Luke's Perspective

I knew that my own father was a subservient and timid person.

However, I also know there is no way it could be made known.

Although he became a lord at a young age, my father's job was a doormat, even in his son's eyes he was a coward, he was dull.

Even as a vassal he was degraded by Grandfather, saying [If only you were like Paul...] His decisions as lord, in Grandfather's eyes, were all unsatisfactory.

When I was home, I witnessed this many times.

My father would be troubled by his father, and I would suffer as a result.

Now, such a father is about to be executed in front of me.

It's inception, but father reaps what he sowed.

The promise with Sword King Ghyslaine is also involved.

I would be lying if I said there was no possibility father was involved in the execution of Sauros Boreas Greyrat.

Father's and Sauros's relationship was bad.

Or rather, I would say grandfather and Sauros had a good relationship.

The Head of Boreas House and the previous Head of Notus House were like brothers.

But Sauros did not like Philemon.

Before he became lord, Sauros did not hesitate to insult father.

Even after becoming lord, Sauros sent complaints and bad-mouthed him at every opportunity.

So, when Sauros was in trouble...

I do not think it strange at all if my father had his hand in Sauros's execution.

If it was father, he would do it.

Well, although I was upset when I heard it, that was due to Hitogami's lie.

When I see father's face after eight years...

He looked much older than the father I remembered, the father that I met for the first time in eight years looked small.

"....."

Suddenly, I remembered when I had wanted to talk man-to-man with father.

I was young, I had a lot to talk about with my father.

In retrospect, it seemed father favored my eldest brother.

As the second son, I have come to terms with this.

My father would not discuss important matters with me; but, when we did talk, he never held any bad intentions towards me.

I did not know anything, and my father told me as much, but he helped me find my own answers.

Although he told me [Think on your own], he still helped show me the way.

He is still my father.

My father is rarely right.

He's clumsy and always makes mistakes in his decisions.

But that father was always working hard for Ariel.

Since we were ambushed as we departed for Asura Kingdom, I have been struggling with that father as an enemy.

Why did that father act so selfishly?

Although I refer to him as selfish, father was serving as the family head, so he had a duty to protect the house.

After Ariel escaped from Asura, father was forced between a rock and a hard place trying to protect the house by aligning with Grabell.

He even sent his soldiers to that ambush in order to protect the house.

Father was desperate to gain Grabell's trust.

"Ariel-sama, please listen to my request."

"What is it, Luke?"

"Will you please forgive my father?"

Ariel is facing me.

Her eyes are cold.

Recently she has been looking at me with those eyes more and more.

Particularly since she discovered father's betrayal.

"... I cannot do that."

"Is this because of the promise with Ghyslaine?"

"No, this is because I cannot afford to allow betrayal."

That's right.

Father and Ariel, no matter how friendly they were...

My father betrayed her in a major way, and he even sent his soldiers to kill Ariel.

If she allows this, she can not maintain her rule.

Even I understand this.

However, after all he has done, will Philemon Notus Greyrat still meet such an end?

I do not know what that false god did to them.^[1]

Rudeus and Ariel also might have been deceived.

But, my father has betrayed Ariel.

To rejoin Ariel's faction now means that he will have defected twice; calling it a shameless act is true.

But I...

I don't want this.

"....."

I drew my sword...

"..... Luke?"

"I'm sorry."

"What?"

I did not know how I came to such an action.

Before I had noticed, I had grabbed Ariel from behind...

While holding my sword to her neck.

"... Luke. What do you think you're doing?"

Sylphy noticed immediately.

She is glaring at me with a stern expression, I can feel her killing intent.

This is the face that she absolutely never lets Rudeus see.

In her hand is a wand for an apprentice magician.

A small wand just like the one I used when I started to learn magic.

However, I know. That wand can fire magic on par with even the best of Asura's Court Magicians.

Such a thing is aimed directly at me.

"Sylphy, do you not think it's strange?"

"I think the strange one is you! Who do you think you have turned your blade on?"

I'm aware that this is strange.

It's more like I do not know what I want to do now.

Everyone's sight has focused on me.

The nobles are wearing expressions as if they don't understand what's happening.

...Is this it for me?

Em, is this right?

"Sylphy, do you really believe that man?"

"That man? You mean Orsted? What are you talking about suddenly? What does that man have to do with this situation?! "

"Answer me honestly!"

To my strong tone, while holding her wand, Sylphy replied in a low voice.

"I do not trust him."

"Then why? Why do you follow Rudeus? Even after he became that devil's subordinate!"

"It is because I believe in Rudi."

I do not know the meaning of her words.

"Rudeus has become Orsted's subordinate. Didn't his behavior change? Isn't he being manipulated by Orsted!?"

Honestly, it is not like I want to draw Sylphy to my side.

However since Sylphy married Rudeus, she hasn't been thinking properly.

She's been blindly following Rudeus, it's as if she no longer has her own opinions.

The one who taught her this was me.

Listen in silence to what your husband says to gain his love, he must have taught that to all his wives.

...At least, I knew this because my mother did not do so.

She didn't love my father, which led her to leave the house.

"You, did you even think about it? That even Rudeus can make mistakes."

Sylphy was incensed.

"I know that! But Rudi is moving with the thought of protecting us! For us, to not hold our head down and appreciate his efforts, is like exposing our ugly side! I do what I must do, rather than saying anything that would annoy him or cause any misdirection, I take his side, because I will support him from behind! "

Sylphy answered clearly.

Rudeus was her only concern.

In the last few years, I think she's changed quite a lot.

"In that case, does Ariel-sama still matter to you?"

As I said that, I pressed the sword against Ariel-sama's neck.

What I'm pressing against her neck is the flat of the sword.

After this, I will be executed as a traitor, but I cannot afford to scratch Ariel-sama's skin.

The skin of a woman should always be beautiful.

"How dare you!"

That's really true.

And then, behind Sylphy, I saw Rudeus appear in the entranceway.

His eyes started to widen at this scene.

"Hey, Sylphy. You'll respect Rudeus's opinion, even if that opinion comes from that evil Orsted?"

"... Yes, I will always believe him."

"In other words, it's this situation."

I'm watching Rudeus.

He's trying to figure out the situation, looking over the surroundings restlessly.

His eyes stopped for a moment, but soon turned away, looking disappointed.

He had seen Perugius.

Despite being in such a situation, Perugius is still sitting on his chair at the head table.

He almost looks as if he's enjoying a particularly funny play.

"If you want to help Ariel-sama, then kill Rudeus."

Sylphy's eyes widened.

"If I said that, what would you do?"

Sylphy has not looked behind her.

She should not have noticed Rudeus.

"If you had to choose between them, who will you choose?"

Even if I do say so myself, this is a nasty question.

I wonder why I asked such a question.

It's off topic.

"I choose Rudi."

Sylphy didn't hesitate with her answer at all.

At a rate that can almost be called an immediate answer, she answered yes.

"I know it's a bad choice for Ariel-sama, but if I'm forced to choose, I cannot turn my back against my husband or my child."

Just a little bit, it is a lonely answer for me.

It must be a lonely answer for Ariel as well.

Rudeus is posing like [Incredible], holding his mouth with both hands.

This guy, even after arriving late, is frustrating.

"I will follow Rudi. I do not know what the result will be. We may fall into some serious problems, and may end up being killed by Orsted... But even at that time, I'm going to support Rudi. That way we will remain married for life."

Those words struck me like an arrow.

Oh, so there are things like that. I felt something churning in the pit of my stomach.

Lost in my own thought, I only felt one answer come out...

".....Haa."

A small sigh came out.

Really, I wonder what I'm doing.

Did I made a mistake and put Ariel in danger?

I also, even if she did not like that, wanted to be there for Ariel.

As her knight, our relationship is not unlike being married for life.

Orsted is the false god.

Between Hitogami and Orsted, Hitogami is certainly more believable.

However, between Ariel and Hitogami, who's more believable.

It goes without saying.

It's fine to just watch over Ariel's choices, obey her, and then protect her, without any regard for myself, if anything goes wrong.

I was fine with that.

Ah, all my reason is coming back to me.

"So, Luke."

Ariel finally speaks.

She has been silent all this time until she heard my sigh.

"In the end Sylphy chose Rudeus over me, will you cut me down then?"

"What?"

"If so, I want to talk to my little brother before I'm cut down. Can I at least ask him to grant safe passage for Sylphy and them out of the country, please? "

Ariel, said so in a low tone.

"Are you not going to ask me why?"

"Yeah."

I was saddened.

After everything that has happened I have no excuse, but she, Ariel, thought that I was betraying her.

The one who has been together with her for as long as I can remember,

The one who has served her so faithfully all these years,

The one who would gladly serve as her shield,

Even now, the first one that I've always thought of is Ariel-sama.

She thought I was someone who would betray her at the last minute.

However, with her following words, that idea disappeared.

"Just one thing, Luke."

"...?"

"I am your princess."

Tears almost came out.

For me, that word was enough.

Even now, Ariel is still sees me as her knight.

She didn't think I want to betray her.

She thinks that I absolutely won't betray her.

This, even in a situation with a sword pressed to her neck,

And she did not think that I wanted to betray her.

"..."

Discarding the sword, I released Ariel.

The tense atmosphere immediately relaxed with the dry clang.

I knelt and looked up at Ariel.

Eyes frosty as ever, she looked down at me.

"Luke, what are you?"

"I'm your knight."

Ariel smiled softly.

Looking at that smile, I bowed my head, it was a pose to show the neck by dividing the hair.

"So, please cut the neck of this traitor."

I still don't want to die.

I still have many things I want to do.

But, it is good.

I'm satisfied.

"....."

Ariel picked up the sword, and lifted it heavily with one hand.

She strikes my head with the blunt side of the sword.

Dull pain courses through my brain.

"Luke. You, the playboy, unable to endure your sudden urge, hugged me and groped my body."

".....?"

"Originally it is an act that is not allowed, but given that I was also horny, I'll forgive you."

I looked up at Ariel.

Smiling mischievously, she gave me a wink.

That smile is one I haven't seen for a long time.

Nowadays, she only carries a fake smile. This is the smile from her younger days.

"Haah..."

I was forgiven.

Even though my speech and action were a betrayal, I was forgiven.

I was not blamed.

"Well, then."

When I take a breath, Ariel turned around to my pale father.

My father humbled himself upon seeing her gaze.

"What shall I do?"

My father's judgement.

By forgiving my betrayal, the air in the place has changed a little.

Generosity seems to be in the air.

However, my father's crime is heavy.

He tried to take Ariel's life.

If you try to make excuses you will not be forgiven as I was.

You did not act without reason.

While I was in thought, Rudeus approached us and spoke.

"Earlier, Darius had claimed that Sauros-sama's execution was his own plot. Philemon-sama didn't participate in it "

"...What happened to Darius?"

"Dead... I killed him."

"...Is that so, then let's put all the blame on Darius."

As she said that, Ariel turned to face behind me.

Unaware, Eris and Ghyslaine were already behind me.

If I had kept holding Ariel, I might have been cut down from behind.

"Ghyslaine, is that alright with you?"

"I..."

Ghyslaine has a dissatisfied face.

Does she want to cut off my father's head so much?

And then there's Eris pulling Ghyslaine's tail tightly.

Ghyslaine looked surprised and trembled at that sensation. She focused on Eris.

When she released her hand, Eris raised her chin and folded her hands.

"Ghyslaine. My grandfather's enemy, please endure him a while longer!"

"...If Eris-ojousama says so."

At those words, Ariel turned towards my father with a satisfied look.

"So that's how it is, Philemon-sama. You'll receive judgement at a later time."

"Ha ...!"

That's certainly generous towards my father, he was prostrating on the floor.

You will not go without blame, but at least your life has been spared.

"Luke... I'm sorry..."

His voice was weak, but I felt his warmth.

I looked around.

While saying something, Sylphy is clinging to Rudeus who was patting her head.

With her face down embarrassed, altogether Sylphy's appearance doesn't look too bad.

Eris is talking about something with Ghyslaine.

I heard her voice because it's loud, but she is talking proudly, [Rudeus was saying it before, this is what I call reading the atmosphere.]

Perugius is unchanged.

From what I can see, he still has an amused expression.

I wonder if there is something amusing for Armored Dragon King-sama in the exchange just now.

My father left with plain clothes.^[2]

His figure is still small, but seems to be somewhat more composed.

And crying over the dead body of the Water God is apprentice knight Isolte or something.

There is no sign of her coming after us.

Darius seems to be dead.

With his strongest backer gone, Grabell sits on a chair exhausted.

Nobles are flocking to his surrounding, but they will not be able to

much longer...

Nobles from Ariel's faction are looking over with puzzled faces.

Among them, Tris is standing with her parents.

There are no more enemies.

Thus, the curtain falls on the battle for Asura Kingdom.

Notes

1. Orsted
2. TLC?

Chapter 187 - Truth of Orsted and Ten Days in the Capital

Part 1

10 days have passed since Darius was defeated.

Defeating Water God Reida, defeating Auber, overthrowing Darius, and Perugia coming to the Asura Kingdom were enough to overwhelm Grabell.

Philemon was stripped of his position, and now he is under house arrest in his territory.

Luke became the Notus family head, and Luke's big brother seems to fill the role of his assistant.

Luke's brother is sociable, from that they can expect a smooth transition through the political war.

He's the one who practically makes decisions instead of Luke.

Initially, Ghyslaine was still hostile towards Philemon.

But Luke's brother, who was praising Ghyslaine and even went as far as making a marriage proposal to her, helped dissolve the tension.

Like a dog being happily praised by its master, she looks somewhat proud.

By the way, Ghyslaine is still working as Ariel's escort.

She has already become a permanent employee now.

I don't know what her true feelings are, but let's say she is good at this point.

Part 2

Let me talk in order about what happened in the 10 days following the battle at the venue.

First Day. The matter with Orsted.

After defeating Darius, our triumphant return from the venue led to a victory celebration.

As expected from Ariel, but I was exhausted and retired to my room.

Even if I say that, after returning to my room, all I could think about was how Sylphy openly confessed her love for me by saying [I choose Rudi] in public.

Honestly, because I was dumped in the diary, I was feeling a little anxiety.

For her to proudly choose me in front of so many people...

She's a better girl than I deserve.

However, Sylphy also seemed tired, at the end of the game without having to rush the second round.

Sylphy fell asleep peacefully.

I bathed with cold water to cool myself.

On the way back, Eris was bursting into me with rough breaths and still in battle excitement, admiring me wildly.

I think, Eris is a wild young lady who has learned to control her malice.

The next day my spirit was so drained I felt as if I didn't have the energy to breathe and shriveled up like a dried fish.

Then a maid came with a letter addressed to me.

The letter was sealed with a crest of a dragon.

No doubt, it's an office memo.

The contents of the memo were brief, expressing concern over any injuries and stating the location of today's meeting.

The conference room was in a cemetery located on the edge of the nobles' residential area.

Not only is the cemetery old and unkempt, it's also a wide and lonely place, like an island in the middle of the capital.

The conference room is in a crypt below one of the tombs.

This seems like a place that would be filled with the undead at night.

There one who is more frightening than the undead lurked.

"Have you come, Rudeus Greyrat?"

"Yes, I'm here!"

Sitting on the coffin, Orsted was waiting with one hand on his chin ^[1].

What he's doing now is disrespectful towards the deceased.

I cannot bring myself to sit on the coffin, so I begin making tables and chairs with earth magic and set up a candle that was brought.

"Please."

"Oh, pardon me."

Under invitation from the chairman, I also sit after him.

Well, it's the start of the meeting.

"First of all, let me congratulate your hard work, Rudeus. Now, Ariel becoming king is confirmed "

"Can't it not be confirmed until the previous king's death? Or has it already been established?"

I heard that in his old age the King was suffering from an incurable disease... but, there is still time until his death.

During that time, Grabell's faction will definitely try to struggle to regain their position, and not just once or twice.

We can't let our guard down yet.

We still need to ensure Ariel takes the throne.

There are still uncertainties.

Water King Isolte whose teacher was killed in front of her eyes...

The Boreas house who sided with Darius...

I should be very careful of these two.

They've been forced into a corner, they will likely do everything within their power to lash out.

I had thought this... but.

"Oh, Ariel had already become king when she received Perugius's backing. Defeating Darius was only a matter of time."

Orsted seems confident.

For me, I won't be sure yet, but he seems to think everything is already set in stone.

"You look confused, Rudeus Greyrat."

Oops, looks like he could tell from my face.

"I ~~ee, I was wondering, Orsted-sama. There are still some parts that I can't be sure of."

"..."

Orsted is staring at me.

Honestly, does just saying that mean I don't trust my president?

All I'm trying to say is that it's not over yet.

"Iya~, look, Orsted-sama, are you sure that you didn't miss

anything? Maybe it looks like the end, but we can't make sure that Hitogami didn't leave anything behind as parting gift right? So, there is no reason to say that this is already over."

"..."

That's all I can say, I have no choice now but to remain silent.

Orsted is still hiding something from me.

Surely, he won't tell someone like me what it's is.

"I'm formerly Hitogami's apostle anyway, you don't need to tell me..."

Those words came out clearly from me.

Words that I did not intend to let out.

A slip of the tongue.

Hearing that, Orsted rises.

Observing me with his tremendous power.

"Iyaa, I, I'm sorry, I didn't mean it like that... It's not like I'm unhappy with things that you didn't tell me."

"Certainly, Rudeus Greyrat, I did not trust you completely."

While fully opening my foresight eye, I'm looking for a way to escape.

It is useless, I'm surrounded by Orsted's shadow.

When I run away, he will catch up to me immediately.

It can't be helped, showing my belly is the only way^[2].

"This time, the likelihood of you betraying me was also taken into account, I was constantly monitoring you."

Monitoring.

Well, I can believe it.

Orsted's mood, even Auber, everybody seems to have been

watching me while I was on the job.

"But you have proven that you are not a man that's just all talk, you can be trusted."

"...."

"I must also apologize to you, Rudeus Greyrat. I have lied to you."

After having said that, Orsted sat back down.

"You lied?"

After asking again, Orsted was showing a scary face.

Well, he has a difficult face.

This man, I think he must put a little more time to practice his smiling face.

Smiling is a cornerstone of communication.

Then again I've been told I'm not very good at it either.

"Yes. I told you before that in exchange for obtaining the power to see fate, by using the secret technique created by the first generation Dragon God to fight Hitogami, I am separated from the principles of the world."

"Yes."

That was how he could see a rough version of the future.

"Half of it is a lie. I don't have any power to see the future."

Hmm...

"So, the part about being separated from the principles of the world is true, right?"

"Yes. But, Rudeus Greyrat. What do you think it means to be separated from the principles of the world?"

I wonder if there's a hint somewhere.

For example, the curse.

Orsted has been cursed to become hated.

No, that shouldn't matter.

"The slow recovery of magic... is a side effect, I suppose."

"Yes, my magic recovery is significantly slow and in exchange Hitogami can't interfere with me. But, did not you think this was strange? Hadn't you questioned why the first generation Dragon God included a disadvantageous trait like that in his own secret technique? "

Even if you ask why...

In order to avoid Hitogami's interference, weren't you forced to use the technique despite such a disadvantage?

But no... When using Orsted's bracelet for protection, I don't have such a disadvantage.

"The first generation Dragon God devised a secret technique to win against Hitogami with absolute certainty."

"...."

"That secret technique sacrifices my mana recovery rate in order to, no matter when and where I die, let me redo things from the beginning with my memories intact."

Redo.

In other words, Orsted really is...

"The beginning refers to the winter of Dragon Armor Year 330. The northern part of the central continent, inside a nameless forest. My time extends for about 200 years. Once I've exceeded that time limit, if I haven't killed Hitogami, I'm forcibly reset to that point. Even if I die along the way."

Time leap.

I thought that it was possible, but...

To think that was really the case.

"You who have already witnessed the time teleportation ought to believe it."

"Yeah, true..."

The future me, got the inspiration to travel through time from a Dragon Race ruin.

The Dragon Race had arcane magic that could reincarnate one into the future from the past.

In that case, the Dragon God being capable of time leap magic, is not strange at all.

Anyway, It could summarized into something like that.

"Um, then, about how many times has Orsted-sama already resetted?"

"I stopped counting after 100 times."

Orsted hatefully spits out words like those of Rashou. ^[3]

Well, that's 100 times 200 years, 20,000 years.

He's been continually looping for more than 20,000 years?

It feels like I'm getting dizzy...

"However, in these hundreds of loops, I've seen the battle of Grabell and Ariel many times. Who is necessary, who is unnecessary. What is needed for Ariel to win, what is needed for Grabell to win. And at this stage, Grabell can't make a comeback. Ariel's victory is guaranteed."

"Is that true even if Hitogami is involved?"

"Yes. Because Hitogami doesn't carry over his memories, he doesn't know that I reset, but I know of his existence, and ever since I began fighting him, I've participated in battles like this many times. And in all of those patterns, at some point Hitogami backs away."

"And you're saying this point is one of them?"

"That's right."

I get it.

Orsted's explanation sounds convincing, he's seen this fight play out hundreds of times, he has tens of thousands of years of experience.

Then there may be exceptions?

I suppose at some point, when put in exactly the same situation, people will take similar actions...

However the situation is never exactly the same, so the possibility of an exception should exist...

"So, you can be at ease. If we've already brought things this far, Ariel will be king."

"I understand"

If you're saying that, then Ariel will become king.

Orsted will only lose confidence in me if I have too much anxiety.

"Orsted-sama. Can you really win against Hitogami?"

"Yeah, I'll win. I've already established what's necessary and what preparations are required to defeat him. You're here this time too. I am only one step away."

Then, I will believe those words.

Although Orsted can't see the future, and it's seems like he's been reset many times now, it doesn't matter...

Because I have no choice but to do this.

Let's do my best.

In order to protect my family.

Part 3

Day 3.

Isolte came to visit the mansion we're staying in.

By the way, Ariel gave me this house.

It is one of Ariel's private houses, although it's smaller than her second house, it's still about two times larger than my home in Sharia.

It even came with a full set of employees to manage the household.

As a villa in the Asura Kingdom, it looks good and feels free to use.

The house is good.

But Isolte.

Did she come to see Eris?

Or is she here for revenge?

Although I was casting skeptical glances and remained vigilant, she received our polite hospitality.

After greeting the maids, Eris guided her to the living room.

Eris asked for a maid to bring the tea, Eris' attitude towards Isolte was very friendly.

I am a gentleman.

There will be no stiff shoulders in my house.

Though Aisha's a maid, not a servant.

Isolte seems curious about my presence.^[4]

While being vigilant, she bowed and began introductions.

"Nice to meet you, my name is Isolte Cruel. Me and Eris became acquainted in the Holy Land of the Sword. Please treat me well even after this "

"Thank you very much, my name is Rudeus Greyrat. Husband of

Eris."

After my greeting, she blatantly frowned.

"So... it's you."

Yes, it is me.

It seems that I'm quite hated, though I knew that from her conversation with Eris the other day.

"... Yes, I'm Rudeus"

"The one who ditched Eris, and also married another two wives after that?"

"..... Yes."

I know this feeling.

It's the same feeling I have with Cliff.

A newcomer to the Millis congregation!

"Surely, I had mistaken you with that womanizer knight named Luke."

"Well, I didn't mean to lie?"

"No it's fine, because I just misunderstood."

Isolte was smiling and looking quite glad.

"Nevertheless... You cherish Eris more than I thought, don't you?"

"Does it seem like that?"

She asked that abruptly.

I do not know what it means to cherish Eris, but Eris is important to me.

However, I do not think in exchange up to now that there has been such an element.

"Water King Isolte came to see us.

Disciple of the Water God Reida who was killed in our venue.

Possibly, she might be the enemy of Princess Ariel.

Possibly, she might have come for revenge.

Possibly, Eris might pull out her sword.

I need to protect her. I need to fight with her...

That's what's written on your face."

Mu, such long sentences are written on my face?

Recently, my face has become easy to read.

Should I keep practicing my smile again?

Well, it's fine.

"You're saying that's related to cherishing Eris?"

"If you didn't, you would just leave her alone. She's your third wife, after all."

I don't really like Eris being called my third wife, because I have decided to disregard the order.

"Honesty, I've been thinking, I expected Eris to be neglected a bit more. She's usually only strengthening her arms, body, and sword. She's not a good talker, her circumstances are..."

Like a dominant husband.

Yes, Eris is not very talkative.

There isn't much talk about on her side, and when it's night she requests my body..... ara?^[5]

A dominant wife?

No, rather than not talking, we still do stuff together like training.

"That Eris is happy, I was relieved a little."

"If you are so, then I am also happy."

When I said that, Isolte laughed.

It's a crystal clear smile.

Though it looks neat and clean, I can feel her sex appeal.

She'll become very popular some day, but she's still in budding form.

After she marries, she will become a flower.

That's the charm of married woman group.

E, Eris-san.

It is painful if you're stepping on my foot.

"So, what are you here for? Rudeus is mine, so I won't give him to you."

Eris showing an honest attitude as usual.

"I don't need something like that."

"Then what, a duel?"

She called me 'that'. Disheartening.

Isolte had a troubled face.

"Nevertheless, there is also teacher's last will, but Ariel-sama also didn't make a fuss about the Water God Style incident. I will never turn into her enemy."

As scheduled, as soon as the period of apprentice knight ends, Isolte, I hear she was going to be recruited as knight.

She will replace her master as the fencing coach.

A title might be possible as well.

"Regarding Master, there are also many who sympathize with her in the royal palace. Princess Ariel herself didn't want to turn Water God Style into her enemy."

"Well, isn't that so."

Well I can imagine, swordsmen in this world are monsters.

But they still yield to those with higher standings rather than face them as enemies.

A person whose strength is in their sword is better as an ally.

"With that, we could escape from the fate of having our dojo demolished, so I'm fine with it."

The story was that Reida was the sole perpetrator.

A single crazy person after Ariel's head.

Even in place filled with political strife, it's unbelievable that an assassin would act so brazenly.

An assassin that attacks in public will have nowhere to run.

Although we could bear witness to the truth, blame would certainly follow.

When it comes to the power struggle between Ariel, Grabell, and Darius, even I want to erase her blame to some extent.

Even after this incident, Ariel did not want to exact revenge against the Water God Style.

Fighting against the Water God Style... I want to avoid fights I don't have a sure chance of winning.

It's a mutually beneficial arrangement, so no one will be blamed for this.

"It was a shame that Master died, but at least she was able to die a warrior's death, even in peace time. It was what she wished for. As for me, I was more shocked because I wasn't informed."

It seems Isolte wasn't seriously concerned regarding Reida's death.

This sort of attitude is almost like an adventurer.

"Certainly... even if I want to exact revenge, the other side has Ghyslaine and Eris. I'm also lacking against Rudeus-sama, so it's

pointless."

Isolte was likely feeling a little regret.

I wonder, are you a little regretful that you did not chase Orsted in that place?

"I don't mind fighting solo."

"Please do not make that kind of joke, Eris. Now I have a duty to protect the dojo. If I'm fighting another crazy swordsman like you, I might get permanent damage."

Crazy.

It's a word that fits Eris.

"A dojo is just a stupid thing"

"Can you really say that after abandoning your house's status and obligations?"

"..."

Eris was silent.

With an uncomfortable expression.

Isolte said that with mischievous eyes.

"Well, it hasn't been a year yet since our parting, let's enjoy the moment together and strengthen our bond "

"Yeah, Yeah!"

Eris's cheeks were flushed, she looked as if she seriously thought that.

However, Isolte's expression is completely the opposite.

Geez, you have the face to me, I'll limit it to keep giving the meat to the dog.

She's good at handling people like Eris.

"The main reason I came today is to see Eris. Because it's been long-awaited, I will guide you through the Imperial City "

"Yeah. It's the place you left for after we separated! Let's go!"

"Rudeus-san, please come along with us."

She might end up quarreling with Eris somewhere.

And it's possible her the conversation until now has been a lie. Eris may be led into a trap where many Water God style disciples lie in wait, so I should go with her.

"... Then, allow me to tag along."

With that said, we started exploring the Imperial City along with Isolte.

Despite my concerns, Isolte guided us around the town normally and seemed to have fun spending time with Eris.

Acting like this just a few days after her master had died...

Well, it may just be her personality.

Part 4

Fifth day.

A dinner invitation came from the Boreas house.

The invitation was for myself and Sylphy.

It was an invitation to dine without Eris.

Is it poison?

Needless to say, we were very vigilant.

Based on their story, it seemed they wanted to get close to Ariel through me.

They didn't include Eris because they still feel wary.

If seems that they're holding a little grudge towards Eris, but they've decided to let it go for now.

Eris and Boreas are already opposing each other.

It would be annoying for them if Eris tried to return to Boreas after this long.

Though that doesn't matter. Eris is mine.

At that dinner, I gave them some vague answers.

Part 5

Day 8.

Let me take the time to recount the current state of affairs.

Tris has returned to the aristocracy.

Her standing is the same as Elmore and Kleene, Ariel's longtime servants.

Ariel seems to think that a back door to the thieves' group is available, and is using Tris to broker deals with them behind the scenes.

Luke and Ariel are moving energetically toward the future, they likely have no time to spare.

Darius's death caused a little confusion in the Royal Palace.

Though that's not important since Ariel is stepping up to become King.

Perugius returned to the Sky Castle, leaving one familiar behind in the Royal Palace.

When I sincerely gave him my condolences about his two familiars being killed, he replied that they could be revived in the Sky Castle.

Familiars sure are convenient.

As you said Orsted, everything is progressing smoothly.

It looks like there's nothing left for me to do anymore.

My work was over.

So let's go home soon.

After sending that message to Ariel, she immediately scheduled to meet me the next day.

Part 6

At Night.

Ariel's Boudoir in the Royal Palace.

I was accompanied by Sylphy; I wanted to avoid being suspected of cheating on my wives as much as possible, so I decided to visit Ariel with her.

I wasn't asked to come alone.

Ariel's boudoir was ultra-luxurious.

Of course, it's part of the Royal Palace, but it's as big as a house.

The furniture's fluffiness is the highest grade. The sofa feels like it will melt.

Everything was shining brightly even though it wasn't metallic, probably because it's top class in this world.

Usually a room like this would be filled with maids.

But it seems that Ariel dismissed them for our meeting.

In a cold and empty room lined with luxurious furniture, Ariel poured wine for me.

"Please."

"Thank you."

Purple liquid was poured into a set of golden cups.

Wine.

I wonder if it's high quality.

"So Sylphy also came."

"Yeah, because if Rudi is meeting alone with a beauty in the middle of night, a strange rumor might spread."

"Well. Certainly, I don't know what will happen in a private meeting."

Ariel laughed, but Sylphy was not laughing.

I wonder if she didn't think that was a joke.

"If it's Rudi, it will somehow really happen."

There's no trust in my lower body.

Well, there is no way there would be.

But, I have confidence in Sylphy.

That time she said that she was prepared to pick me over Ariel...

Honestly, my heart skipped a beat then.

But it seems that to Sylphy, Ariel is a praying mantis that wants to eat me.

"Now then."

After having finished pouring the wine, Ariel also sat on her seat.

"Rudeus-sama. I would like to say my thanks again. Thanks, for what you've done so far."

"No, it is the result of your efforts Ariel-sama."

Ariel's personal connections in Ranoa kingdom have proved useful.

She's filled the hole left behind by the deceased Darius.

She's promoted talented people to replace the important posts held

by the Grabell faction.

If she keeps up her current pace, Ariel will have complete control of Asura Kingdom.

"Giving me advice to convince Perugius-sama, advice for the trip, advises for other cases... If I didn't get your advice at that time, Rudeus-sama, I would still be frustrated even now."

"I'm feeling embarrassed now."

"Really, like Sylphy said. It might be good to spend one night together."

While saying that, Ariel sent a bewitching glance to me.

My eyes quickly wandered to certain places, like Ariel's nape, but after being glared at by Sylphy, I hurriedly hung down my head...

Ariel returned with a smile.

"Well, though that part was a joke, the part about my thanks is true."

"Your gratitude is, well..."

Because of this incident, I got a house.

That house would probably be good to use as my vacation home in the future...

"Is there anything you want? You promised in front of Luke that you wanted neither a title nor land but, is there anything unusual that I may freely provide?"

I have considered this.

What I can obtain from Ariel...

Basically anything.

Asura Kingdom has just about everything.

Maybe magic manuals?

Oh, no.

There was one.

One thing to ask.

"There is one thing, at first this will take some time, but I have already planned it out. Please set up and put up for sale my figurine and book set. It is in the image of the Supard Race, but if I have Royal authorization it will be easier to do business."

"Oh, is that what you were talking about with Perugius-sama?"

"Yeah, is that difficult?"

In Asura kingdom, the Millis religion is popular.

Even with permission from the royal family, selling the likeness of a Magic Race...

It's possible to cause some friction.

"It is not that difficult. It's important to prepare workshops as well for mass-producing."

"What about the Millis doctrine, will they be all right with it?"

"It's all right. That sort of thing can be solved with money."

O~h, the power of money!

That's good.

Becoming the Asura Kingdom's King was the same as becoming the richest man in the world.

"So, if there is progress after I return..."

"Yes, I will wait."

I got a studio and sponsors.

After that the plan's growth depends on Julie.

It certainly was written in the diary, that I successfully make a picture book and sell it.

...Also, I must find a painter.

To interest as many people as possible, the best option is still a picture book.

There are many people who can't read, but picture books can be viewed by anyone.

While I was starting to see dollar signs, Ariel straightened her posture, and turned to Sylphy.

"Sylphy, thanks for the hard work."

"... Yeah. Ariel-sama, also cheers for your good work."

Yesterday, Sylphy officially ended her job as Ariel's escort.

It seems the takeover procedures were also finished yesterday, so she has a lot of free time.

"After the other day, I guess there's no more need for me?"

"Yes. It is all right now. Thank you very much for protecting me for such a long time."

As she said that, Ariel bowed deeply to Sylphy. Really deeply.

Ariel lowering her head was an unusual scene.

"Ariel-sama, please raise your head"

"But, I do not want to lie to you, I really can't think of any reward good enough for Sylphy. This feeling is the only thing that I could give you. I want to tell you, with my feelings and words. You've helped me very much."

"It's okay, because we're friends, of course I'll help you."

While saying so, Sylphy continued to grip Ariel's hand.

A friendship for ten years, right?

It's nice, a relationship like this.

"But Sylphy, I'll come to play some time "

"Yeah, well, if you have any errands towards the Ranoa... I doubt it's a place you can just show up at."

"Well, when I'm a guest at Ranoa Castle. At that time, I will send the invitation."

"Haha, that's like a VIP guest."

Then, Ariel and Sylphy spent some time talking and laughing together.

While listening to them, I was reminded of when I met Sylphy for the first time.

It was an image of Sylphy walking all alone.

The Sylphy who was pelted with mud balls by other children, failing to offer any resistance.

That Sylphy was now talking and laughing with the princess of a country.

Such a thing, was somehow, quite the happy scene.

Then, the day I leave Asura kingdom arrived.

Notes

1. Hozue
2. surrendering
3. From Hokuto no Ken
4. She thought Eris' husband was Luke previously.
5. Reminder: Ara = oh my

Chapter 188 - Farewells and Sylphy's Change

Part 1

Day of departure.

Early morning.

Before the sun rose, a person appeared.

It's Ghyslaine.

Bringing three wooden swords with her, she came to the mansion.

What do you want? What do you plan to do?

I mean, even without the need to explain I somehow knew why she came.

Eris and I received a wooden sword in silence, and went out to the garden after changing our clothes.

The garden of the house is quite wide, but because of the various flowers that are planted here, I feel it's a little cramped.

However, I think it's enough for what we will do now.

Standing in the garden, before Ghyslaine, Eris and I raise our swords.

Sylphy with a sleepy face, sitting on a chair not far away from us.

A maid who had been working since early morning came to watch out of curiosity.

"Let's start the lesson."

With Ghyslaine's words, taking the swords on our waists, Eris and I bowed.

"Thank you."

Ghyslaine gave a small nod and she took up her sword.

Our training began.

"Let's start like usual: 1, 2!"

Following Ghyslaine's voice and movement, Eris and I swung our wooden swords.

In the quiet garden, sounds of the wooden swords being swung broke the silent atmosphere.

Compared to Ghyslaine and Eris's movements, my sword movements look dull.

But, Ghyslaine never gave her reproach.

When I learned the art of the sword from her, she would give me a pointer every time I swung my sword.

Today, she didn't say anything.

"Rudeus! Don't space out!"

"Yes!"

But I wasn't!

Is there anything wrong with my stance?

It should be fine.

Because even I can do something like this.

"197! 198! 199! 200! Swinging practice, stop!"

200. With just this, Ghyslaine stopped her movement.

Eris and Ghyslaine had sweat enough to soak their clothes.

After only 200 swings.

This is because those 200 swings were performed to the utmost of their abilities.

It's not only about number.

However, their breath is not rough.

Well me too.

This kind of movement is only a warm-up.

"Then, let's start with Gale Kata Style!"

"Yes!"

Poised with the wooden swords in the standard form, Eris and I swung with movements we were suited for.^[1]

Never wavering.

This was a form that was entirely familiar to us.

A fundamental form of the Sword God Style, I had also taught this to Norn.

After marrying Eris, this was something she and I had done every day.

"All right, stop!"

When all the exercises to be performed in the training were completed, Ghyslaine stopped us.

"Pair training!"

With her command, Eris and I faced each other.

It refers to paired practice with two people involved.

In most cases, it's called hands on practice.

In kendo, the one who receives the attack is the senior.

But, now Eris is the one who's attacking.

It was like that long ago, it's still like that even after marriage.

Then, it's still practiced even now.

"Start!"

"Raaaaaa!"

With Ghyslaine's words, Eris started attacking me.

Because it is only kata she isn't so fast.

But I couldn't keep up with her attack speed, and it ended without me making a move.

Of course, there is no such thing as holding back in Sword God Style.

Eris in the past had no control.

Now she does.

"Switch!"

Now it's my turn to attack, but my sword couldn't reach her at all.

There's no need for me to hold back either.

Not only that, but there is a difference in the swordsmanship between Eris and me.

The condition will be somewhat better if I use Foresight Eye, but I don't use it this time.

Because I didn't have it when I was in Fedoa territory.

So I don't use it now.

"All right, stop!"

In response to orders from Ghyslaine, Eris and I stop our swords.

If it is the usual, we would follow by practicing the basics.

My Foresight Eye and Eris neither of us need basic training, the result is obvious for whoever saw our match.

And, when I was thinking that, Ghyslaine looked at me then gestured to the sidelines.

"Rudeus! You're out!"

I fall back, Ghyslaine came to replace me.

I took about five steps back and sat on the lawn.

Ghyslaine facing Eris, she raised her sword to her hip.

"Eris this is the last."

".... Yes."

Eris nodded, setting up her stance.

She had not taken a proper upper body stance during her training with me.

Ghyslaine took an Iaido stance while Eris pointed her sword to the heavens.

Those two stances are in contrast.

Cold sweat sprouts on my back.

the atmosphere became heavy, time has stopped.

I somehow saw that they're seriously going at each other.

That moment seemed to last forever.

There, a breeze could be felt.

.... There was no signal.

"...."

And Ko~o~o~on, only that sound rang.

My eyes couldn't keep up with their movement.

I was only able to see the result.

Both of their swords moved in a flash.

If there was any difference, Ghyslaine's sword seems to be

deflected slightly.

While Eris's sword, if slightly moved, could have struck Ghyslaine.

"....."

"....."

for a while, those two didn't move from their previous stance.

After a little while they slowly drawback their swords.

Eris's lips forms a "∧" shape.

Ghyslaine gives an earnest face.

Giving a small nod, Ghyslaine said.

"With this, I will end the practice."

"Thank you very much-!"

At her words, I bowed while remained in my sitting position.

Raising my head, Eris while biting her lower lip, had continued bowing her head down.

Wrinkled on the middle of the forehead, Ghyslaine patted Eris's cheek.

"It's farewell. Eris-ojousama..."

"M, master also... you, you are also very skillful!"

Eris looked up, almost brought to the brink of tears, and once again bowed.

Ghyslaine did not say anything more than that.

Just gave me a glance at the end, and went away from the house.

From her eye, will to ask the young lady can't be true to her own feeling.^[2]

It would not be a misunderstanding to me.

I stood up for Ghyslaine, and once again, bowed by bending my waist deeply.

She taught me the sword art, she protected Eris.

I can't thank her enough.

"Waaa! Waaaaa!"

The moment Ghyslaine was out of sight...

Eris cried.

While shouting to distract herself from the sadness, in a voice like it could reach forever, she cried.

Part 2

Before our departure.

Many people came to see Sylphy off.

Although most of the people who came were nobles from Ariel's faction,

And most of them did not even know that Sylphy was a woman,

They were surprised to hear that she was married to me.

However, just because of that it's not like their attitude toward Sylphy changed.

They left again after saying a short thank you.

Sylphy has corresponded with a smile to those people,

It probably was not a very polite manner.

"I'm tired of this kind of thing", I said while grumbling.

The next ones that came to Sylphy were two women.

Elmore Bluewolf.

Kleene Elrond.

Two people I am not acquainted with, but they're Sylphy's close friends.

That I see them sometime and they are had also told their farewell in tears.

Towards the end, Luke came.

He could only spare about 15 minutes.

As Ariel's assistant, and as a local lord,

He has become more and more busy and came to say goodbye during a vacancy in his schedule.

"Sylphy... err, take care of yourself"

"Yes."

Luke looked like he felt a little guilty toward Sylphy. It seems he finds it hard to look her in the eyes.

"Sorry for the thing that I said before."

"No, Luke at that time you were feeling uneasy and it could not be helped. But that shows how much you really care about Ariel-sama, if it was me, I couldn't bring myself do that."

"Is that so...? Thank you."

"You're welcome, I also... said some strange things before."

"Indeed."

After saying that, both of them laughed.

After they had laughed for a while, Luke looked for words with an "Uh..." while giving a wry smile.

And Luke dropped a bombshell.

"Sylphy, if you no longer have a place at Rudeus's home... Come to my place."

The moment I heard that, my body became stiff.

I mean, you know, it's not the place for a marriage proposal, right?

I would prefer if you did not say that when her husband is right next to her...

"I won't break up with Rudi... or even if you said that I won't marry Luke even if that happens, okay?"

"No, it's not a marriage proposal. However, if a time comes when you don't have any place to go, I won't hesitate to welcome you."

Luke sounds so manly.

Putting romantic feelings aside, he'll be there for you when you need him?

Don't say something so confusing.

But, cold sweat can be seen on Luke's forehead.

I wonder if Luke feels some unrequited love towards Sylphy.

And you keep saying that you're not interested in women that have no breasts...

No, that was also a hidden warning to me.

I need to do better.

"Although I think that this will not be the case, I'll come to play every year."

"Oh, also take care."

"Yeah, Luke also take care."

After saying that, Luke left.

Compared to Eris, it was a quick farewell.

Well, because this life is full with meeting and parting, he is that kind of person.

It's a long life.

As long as we live, there will be the opportunity to meet again.

"Rudeus."

While in thought, Luke came to me.

What is this about, I guess?

You want to fight again?

"I'm sorry for doubting you during our journey."

He apologized.

"No, it can't be helped since I did make many suspicious moves."

Luke was tricked by Hitogami that time.

However, in the end even I saw Ariel and Luke as pawns. I was wary of their behavior, actions and speech.

Although I knew that the possibility of Luke being Hitogami's apostle was high.

Since he is not alone in this, he is not at fault.

"Beside, I also doubted Luke-sempai, so we are even."

"... I am saved by those words."

Luke smiled as he scratched his cheek.

"Rudeus, if you become unsatisfied with Sylphy's body, then come to my house. In Notus's house there are plenty of beautiful women with a great figure."

"Luke."

At Sylphy's angry voice, Luke's body shook and shirked. He was barely able to smile.

"That was just a joke."

And, Luke returned back to his horse.

He looked good while riding away on his white horse.

He looks like a prince from some country.

"Rudeus, take care of Sylphy. Sylphy, please be safe and well."

With those words, he rode off.

Although our first meeting was bad, we gradually got along with each other.

If Paul hadn't left his house, I would've grown up under the same roof as him.

If that were the case I would have probably got along with him better.

While thinking that, Sylphy and I watched his back.

Well, I said my goodbyes.

All that's left is to head home.

Part 3

No... there is no need for a long journey back, Perugia can send me.

During this 10-day period Perugia seemed to have assembled a transition magic team at the royal castle.

Go to the Sky Castle with him, then teleport to the ruins near the outskirts of magic city Sharia.

From there, home sweet home is only half a day away.

What a disappointing way to go back.

From what Eris described, it looked like she was hoping to take a month or more on the way home.

"What? I didn't cry like an idiot!"

And, I was beaten.

No, I think that farewells are important.

But I did ruin the moment.

Eris's precious tears are too good.

But I can understand what Eris was thinking. Ghyslaine also seems to think the same way.

Like student, like teacher.

Among them, I just abruptly appeared.

Hey, it's not like Perugius is charging us transfer fees. For him it is a simple matter.

.....but no, it won't do any good for me. It's an emergency route.

Orsted is also capable of creating magic teleport formations,

We might be able to build a direct route to each country, not only in the Asura kingdom,

If those magic formations were known only to us, then not even Hitogami could destroy them.

All right.

Next time I'll propose it.

Part 4

Since using magic teleportation circles are forbidden, we left the city and secretly snuck back in, to enter Perugius's Sky Castle.

By the time we got there, the sun had completely set.

Therefore we were allowed to spend the night in the castle.

Currently I am in one of the Sky Castle's rooms.

With me are Eris, Sylphy.

Before, we arrived with eight people.

Now, only three people returned.

As expected, I feel a bit lonely.

While thinking that, I was looking at the flames of the fireplace.

With the bed in the back, Sylphy and Eris slept side by side.

Although they got their own rooms...

Sylphy, and Eris, for some reason, said they want to sleep in the same room with me.

It was possible to consider that they were there for a reason.^[3]

Possibly, it may be that it was the day of YES today.

But, because Eris hesitated when it comes to 3P, it's become NO.

Anyway, we manage to sleep in a row given the space, but somehow I can't sleep.

While watching the flames dance in the fireplace, I became lost in thought.

My surroundings are quiet.

Only the sound of the fire could be heard.

While watching it, I collected my thoughts.

I won.

I won against Hitogami.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that it was a great victory.

There were no casualties on our side, we defeated all the Apostles, and we made Ariel Queen.

Well, there's still some time until the coronation...

However, too much anxiety will make a great victory tasteless.

Ultimately, this victory was all because of Orsted's plan.

It's an important victory, but this is just round 1.

In the future, he will continue this battle.

Thinking of the outcome of such battles will only invite anxiety and worry.

I.... did I do alright?

Have I done everything I can this time?

I helped Ariel, almost died, became Orsted's underlying, and married Eris.

Was this... good enough?

"Rudi..."

When I was thinking like that, Sylphy suddenly woke up.

"Are you still awake?"

"Yeah."

"Isn't it late?"

She said while looking out the window.

Outside is dark.

Two people not sleeping, a considerable amount of time seems to have passed.

"Whew....."

Sylphy, deciding not to go back to sleep, sat next to me.

Sticking her body to mine, she leaned her head on my shoulder.

I was holding her shoulder as a matter of course.

"....."

For a while, I spend time in silence.

Sylphy's warm body.

She was flushed to the point that I thought she had a fever.

Looking at the nape of her neck, I noticed Sylphy looking at me with upturned eyes.

Sylphy's pupils were somewhat out of focus.

I wanted to kiss her.

Putting power into my hand to bring her towards me, when Sylphy suddenly clearly said:

"Since the time I stopped being Ariel-sama's escort, I have felt a bit lost."

I decided to stop the kiss and hear the story.

"Everything, it's over..."

I looked at Sylphy's refreshing face.

Eight years, she has worked as an escort for Ariel.

Eight years.

From the age of 10 to 18.

In her youth, she was always with Luke and Ariel.

Perhaps, she might feel lost now.

Really, I wonder if I can take their place.

I'm already not Sylphy's friend.

Husband and wife should not be a substitute for friends.

"So Rudi. I was thinking. "

While I'm being silent, Sylphy said clearly.

"Until now, I couldn't always stay with Lucy because I was worried about Ariel-sama. But I think from now on, I will always stay together with her at home."

When I look at Sylphy, she had a face like she decided to do something.

"Lucy is growing bigger and bigger and now she needs me more than ever. "

While saying that, Sylphy pressed her head against my shoulder.

I pat her on the head.

Sylphy's head felt more feverish than usual.

"So, I think I will become a decent mother who dedicates herself to raising her children."

I do not think that Sylphy is a bad mother.

But, if I match it against the common sense of this world...

She could be considered to be neglecting her child.

Leaving their child's parenting to the maid is something that nobles do.

We're not nobles.

But, I'm not originally from this world.

I came from a country where it's not uncommon for both parents to work.

"Apart from that, is there anything you want to do?"

Sylphy is only 18.

In this world she's considered a respectable adult, but she's only 18.

She should still have dreams and aspirations.

It's understandable if she wants to do more with her life instead of rearing children.

But I'm glad she's trying to use raising children to improve herself.

Well, that is just a thought, but it might be a thing that comes from

my lack of awareness as a father.

"Well... something I want to do, uh..."

Tilting her head, Sylphy looked up at me.

"Well I think, I wanted to be like Eris."

"Eris?"

As she said that, I think for a moment and my eyes begin wandering to her breasts.

I did wish for Sylphy's small bust to increase, but even I will be troubled if those become too big.

Well, if you want to become big... I can massage every day.

No, this isn't about her breasts.

"Yes. To be able to stand in the same position as Rudi and fight together. On an equal footing, helping each other and protecting Rudi's back. I think I want that kind of relationship."

"....."

"But Eris, and also Rudi are so far away that I can never hope to reach it. I've realized this."

I do not think such a thing.

Sylphy was more than enough strong.

Indeed, her rank may go down when compared with Eris.

But, that can't be helped.

Because Eris has lived her life only for that.

Instead, Sylphy has a lot of things to do that Eris didn't have.

"So, I gave up on this goal and will protect Rudi's back in another way."

Oh, So.

Unlike Eris, what of me that Sylphy will protect.

"Is it, mother?"

"Yeah, Roxy also seem to have no wish to stop being a teacher for a while. I will work hard, I will take care of the children in the house. I will raise the children properly and won't be afraid to show discipline, properly educating them, whenever you are out."

It is a welcome story.

And, it's a story that I'm sorry about.

I'm sure, in the near future I will not see too much of my family.

As the subordinate of Orsted, I'll likely see more and more work in the fight against Hitogami.

Just like this time, I will surely be forced to travel to lands far from home during the fight.

"Therefore Rudi. From now on, please leave it to me, alright?"

Anyway.

Sylphy is likely to have set on a new goal.

She found a place for herself.

With one stage done, she's taking the first step onto her next one.

"Yeah, I'm looking forward to hearing about everything from you."

Somehow, I've been thinking that suddenly I'm more and more helplessly falling in love with Sylphy.

Sylphy is always cute, she looks more cute than usual today.

It's the last straw, I can't hold it in anymore.

Drawing closer to her face, I kissed Sylphy.

Sylphy accepted it without any resistance.

Further, I moved my hand from her shoulder to her ass.

While hugging her, I noticed Sylphy's eyebrows distort in trouble.

" ...!"

...Then I stopped moving, like a warrior caught in Medusa's glare.

I feel the line of sight.

It's from... the bed.

Eris that should be sleeping was looking over here.

She was watching with wrath in her eyes.

I'm almost certain that she's humming [Dum dum] with her eyes.

Her eyes are like that of a raptor. ^[4]

When I see a scene like this, I feel that she will kill with the slightest sign.

Super scary.

"As I thought, I'm going to sleep soon."

"What? Ha... Yeah, me too."

Me and Sylphy crawling into bed where Eris is waiting for us.

Well, those things can wait until we get back.

In this castle, Perugia is always a voyeur.

"Already, Eris, please do not intrude..."

"I. I'm sorry... but, you're so sneaky, meanie..."

"I'm not sneaky... if you wish, want to do 3P now?"

"Mu, It's impossible, such things with three people it's embarrassing....."

Because Eris sounds so pathetic, I've gotten a bit embarrassed but... I wonder.

Oh well, while listening to those two people talking in a quiet voice, I was getting some comfortable satisfaction.

Sylphy's matter.

In Sylphy's heart, there was one great change.

In this matter, she appears to have grown significantly.

Then, wouldn't I also able to be change a little more?

Leave my back to her... to be changed to a positive.

While thinking so, I fell asleep.

Notes

1. TLC
2. TLC
3. TLC
4. Jurassic Park reference

Chapter 189 - Return and Determination

Part 1

Magic City Sharia, has not changed at all from two months ago.

My hometown now under construction, enlarged and is almost finished. ^[1]

That's right.

Many feelings are accumulated inside my chest.

Orsted promised my family's safety.

To reunite with my family only to find Sharia turned into a pile of ashes and dust.

Donning a headband, Ariel and I would enter into war planning with our president.

Well, I'm relieved that I could joke about nothing in particular.

Passing through the square, we arrived in front our house.

There is no change whatsoever to my house.

It is not burnt, frozen, nor covered in thorns..

Beat was photosynthesizing in the garden, shaking its branch.

Jirou the Armadillo was taking a nap in the kennel.

Peaceful.

"I'm home!"

"Welcome home!"

Upon opening the front door, with a [Tatatata], Aisha jumped out.

Full of spirit, she jumped straight into my chest.

I'm fine.

Above all, this does not seem to change.

"The souvenirs? Have you bought souvenirs?"

"Yes, here is yours."

In a split second, Eris retrieved a box from the luggage.

Suddenly moving away from me, Aisha received it.

"Wow! Eris-nee, thank you!"

Aisha opened the box immediately and removed what was inside.

A ceramic that looks like a rice paddle.

An exquisite relief is engraved on the handle.

Looking at it, Aisha's eyes was beaming.

"It's a mirror! Like the one I saw at Shirone!"

"Yes."

Perhaps because of trade with Begaritto continent, Asura kingdom was selling many glasswork products.

Because it was only a short traveling time this time, I mainly bought glassworks and mirrors.

"Wo~~w.....amazi~~ing! It's amazing!"

"Fufun, you seem to like it!"

Looking at Aisha making a happy face, Eris boasted that she chose it with Sylphy.

Although Eris's sense is not bad, her original choice was too simple.

"When I look at myself, I am really cute...!"

While Aisha is praising herself, she is spinning round and round.

Lilia comes out a moment later, hitting Aisha on the head and adding in some rotation.

Watching a full spirited Aisha, somehow I feel relieved.

They're alright and full of vigor.

"... Lilia-san, Nothing strange happened right?"

I asked for now.

Lilia nodded lightly, expressionless as usual.

"Yes, we're all alright."

"Is that so."

It's good.

It was really good.

And still clinging to my chest, Aisha's expression suddenly darkened.

"Oh! But Onii-chan... Roxy-nee is..."

Roxy!?

What happen to Roxy!?

... No way, a miscarriage!?

No, if it's like that Lilia would have told me.

Or did she have to be hospitalized because her condition is bad?

"Roxy-nee~ is..."

And, when Aisha just stopped her words.

My line of sight is directed to a door leading to the living room.

From there, Roxy's face pokes out.

It looks like she is in low spirits.

"Roxy, I'm back."

At least, she does not look unhealthy.

I cannot see, but she doesn't look injured.

She is very healthy-looking.

"Rudi, welcome back."

Saying that, she remained in that pose and replied without coming here.

"I expected it to take a little more time, but it seems everything went well since you've come back as planned."

"Yes. Ariel-sama won the political war safely "

Well, it's not complete victory yet,

News that [Princess Ariel is dead!] might arrive at a later date...

Well, there is no need to say such a thing.

It's because those are the President's instructions.

"Really? That's good."

Roxy still doesn't reveal herself.

She is only showing her face.

Only face, it can't be that her body became more plump.

You mean.....Roxy has become chubby!?

Roxy's gonna say, there is a myth that her body will continue to become more plump even after giving birth!

It's not like you care about gaining weight?

Because most likely Eris's weight, is about twice that of Roxy?

"Oh, I'll tell you something Onii-chan. Roxy-nee somehow become a little too naive^[2] recently so you must tell her gently "

Aisha's words.

Naive.

When their weight increases during pregnancy, so too does their anxiety.

And, now that she's uneasy, it's my job to reassure her.

"It is not naive."

"Well, why have you been hiding your body all this time?"

When Sylphy said so, Roxy showed her body reluctantly.

I left my house, for about two months.

In the meantime, Roxy's stomach has become fairly larger.

If you think about it, with the weight increase during pregnancy it's a matter of course.

Because it's made... for holding the child inside.

Even so, her chest looks a little bigger.

Maybe some breast milk come out.

Yeah, let's taste it later...

Even so, she is an Migurd of the Magic Race... I wonder if they didn't change as much as the human race.

"Recently, I feel my body is not like my body. My stomach swelling, the inside moving here and there. Everyone said there is no need to be worry, but..."

"Oh, I understand. I also experienced it. But, at that time Rudi was not here."

With Sylphy's addition, my chest stung a little...

I'm so sorry.

Indeed, although it couldn't be helped at that time, I'm sorry.

"Ugh, Sylphy... Roxy... I'm sorry"

"What? Oh, Rudi, I didn't mean that. I'm not gonna blame you for that."

She was taken aback and said that, while her line of sight was swimming here and there.

"Well, Eris-san. Is it alright for me to spend my time alone with Rudi today?"

"Oh? Heh, Th -, that 's alright"

Eris was looking at Roxy's stomach and her own alternately.

I wonder if she had thought about her own pregnancy turn.

"So Rudi, with this you must spend your time with Roxy now, as for luggage, leave it to me... well, I wonder where is Lucy? "

"Zenith-sama is playing with Lucy-sama on the second floor."

"So that's where she is, thank you Lilia-san... ho~ra Eris come on."

"Okay."

Without waiting for my reply, those two go upstairs carrying the luggage.

Part 2

Thus, Roxy and I moved to the living room.

In the living room, the sacred beast Leo was curling in front of the fireplace.

At the corner of the room, there is Jirou the Armadillo.

When Leo saw me he started barking happily and approached me while wagging his tail.

When I pat his head, he begins to lick my hand.

Oh, this guy loves it.

"....."

I sit on the sofa alongside Roxy.

Somehow, she doesn't want to show her body line too much to me, so she's only wearing a loose dress.

I wonder if she is worried about her body line disappearing.

Even though I think her current figure is attractive enough.

"Roxy?"

"Erm, how was your work? Did it go so well that you came back as scheduled?"

"Haven't I already said that before?"

It's unusual for Roxy to be panicking.

What happened to her. And the panicking Roxy is so cute.

Don't tempt me with such a cute reaction.

Although, during the journey there is no such thing that happened,

Feeling a sense of security from having completed my job, it seems my worldly desires have increased.

Anyway, the person who was a little naive suddenly appeared erotic.

As a man-that-you-could-easily-read, I must be careful to not show my desire too much.

Let's just give her some caring words.

All right.

"Err... your stomach has grown quite big, Can I pat it?"

"N, No good!"

Immediate answer.

It's no good?

W, Well, she is at her delicate time.

"Touching my breasts is also a NO."

I was told ahead.

It seems she already thinks that I want to grope her breast like always.

Well, I can't deny that.

"Recently, this yellow stuff comes out."

"I see."

Sylphy also experienced that, the sign of breast milk coming.

It could be treated by massaging them, but I can't do that.

"Well, how about the head?"

When I said that, Roxy moved her head toward me.

I stroke her head.

Her hair is smooth and it feels good in my fingers.

Stomach and chest are a NO go.

But head is good.

I must draw the line first.

I look for a breakthrough at the last minute.

"Ass?"

"...well, that's alright."

While blushing, Roxy gave me an OK.

Seems to be good.

I stroked without reserve.

Round.

Eh, unsatisfied, no it's different.

It's not that, it's that of a child.

"Eerrrr... Roxy, I think I could help you as much as possible "

"R, Really? But, you don't have to overdo it. Aisha could do it, and didn't Rudi have many things to do? "

"There are indeed a lot of things to do, but, even I understand that a pregnant woman takes priority over those things. I'll do anything from helping you down the stairs to helping you bathing."

"Eh, bathing!?"

Roxy overreacted to the word bath.

What.

Stomach and chest is a NO, but ass and head is a YES, yet a bath is not good.

Argh.

"It that so... Rudi, so you'd like to help washing me in the bath..."

Oh, I would love it.

Using a cloth or my hands, I would love them both.

But I must be patient and hold myself back when I do, even if I'm a little backed up.

"Rudi... since you will find out about this sooner or later, I need to tell you something. "

"Yes."

As if she resigned, Roxy was facing toward me.

It's a serious face.

That one?

It must be serious, I wonder if it's something beyond my imagination.

like that actually the baby in her stomach is infected with a horrible

disease.

Maybe a voice saying [Call me Great Emperor of the Demon World!] can be heard from the stomach...

No, if that's the case, Lilia would have definitely told me.

It is an abnormal situation no matter how you look at it.

Then, I wonder what.

Ha ha, you don't mean that the child inside Roxy's stomach is saying [I'm not Rudi's child].

The child has a tail or horn when born.

Oh come on, spare me from such fate...

"....."

Roxy, making a serious face, unbuttoned her clothing.

She then rolled up her dress and showed me her stomach.

Her white stomach swelled greatly, her navel poking out a bit.

Cute.

Yeah, it's cute.

Only that.

There is nothing such as a strange spot on the skin...

"What is the problem?"

"I guess you will understand if you see it?"

I heard it but i don't know where the weird part is...

"Ah... The navel pokes out, I guess?"

Hmm.

Certainly it is a protruding navel.

I wonder if this is what she means.

I guess... I'd better not question a pregnant woman about that.

"...Yeah.... Uuu, is it not strange after all?"

Apparently, Roxy is quite stubborn in this matter.

Well, she's certainly naive.

There is no big deal even when seen.

But, it is important for the person herself.

There was such a thing too.

"...no, it is very cute."

"Now, I will not be deceived. There was a slight pause in your answer."

"It's not a lie; I don't care about that type of thing,"

"It is a lie. Because, didn't Rudi say it before. [Roxy's stomach is the best after all.] while you licked my navel."

I can be such a fool.

Even by me... that such words could have left such a deep impression in her feelings.

Oh, but no, it could be said, that saying something appropriate when you're on the bed is ok.

"Since that day, I've always seriously cleaned my navel. Look at this, Rudi's favorite navel, probably you were disappointed? "

"I'm not."

I was able to answer immediately this time.

I didn't have a navel fetish.

If it's Roxy body, even if she could fire a missile from her navel, I would still worship her.

Oh, I remembered now.

Certainly I seem to lick her navel in the midst of adult sumo at night, Roxy was very shy.

So she needs to be earnestly praised here.

"Rudi, I will not be deceived. You're just saying that."

However, Roxy did not believe me.

Muu~.

"I don't want to be deceived, so please show it with action."

"What should I do?"

Speaking of what I'm able to do, I'm a true devotee of the Roxy cult.

I am fine with making a speech and performing rituals before a congregation of more than 10 million people.

However this would take time, I can't afford to say it right now.

Lost in thought, Roxy moved her stomach towards me.

"Please lick it."

"Is that alright?"

I unknowingly spit that out after receiving such outrageous words from Roxy.

To order me to do such a thing.

Rather, won't you say it's a reward.

I wonder if it's okay to ask that.

No, I can't take it too seriously.

This is the will of the God.

All right.

Please put your hands together!

I, TA, DA, KI, MA, SU!^[3]

"...."

I licked.

While pushing away Leo's approaching nose, I'm licking Roxy's navel.

Just then, something moved in the belly.

Moving [Bikun] and [Pokon] with quite a force,

Because I touch it with my tongue, I noticed it.

Roxy also noticed.

I looked up at her eyes and her body stiffened.

"It moved,"

"...it's probably trying to say welcome home to its father. "

I hug her body.

I pat Roxy's stomach.

Despite what she said just now, she didn't reject it.

A warm stomach.

The baby won't feel a chill.

"....."

Roxy is no longer feeling shy.

With a cherished look, she put her hand over mine.

"Thank you Rudi. It was like Sylphy said, right? Somehow, I am relieved."

Hearing Roxy words, for some reason I was also relieved.

"Again, welcome home Rudi."

"I'm home."

I came back to my home.

Part 3

The next day, I gave homecoming greetings to each of my friends.

Zanoba, Cliff, Elinalise.

Nanahoshi too, when I stopped by in the Sky Fortress.

Come to think of it, my number of acquaintances in the magic city Sharia has also reduced by quite a fair amount.

Most of them have left the town.

Zanoba and Cliff will also leave someday.

While thinking so, I proceed to my destination.

It's evening already.

Under the orange sky, the place I arrived at is a cemetery.

Round gravestones are lined up at this quiet area.

It's not recommended to come at such a time since demons may appear, but I have no choice.

Because it's time to pay my respects.

Entering, I greeted the gravekeeper and went to stand in front of a specific tomb.

Paul Greyrat.

That name is written on the round gravestone.

I clasp my hands in front of the tombstone that still looks new.

"Dad, this time it ended with no one dying."

Placing the liquor I bought at the Royal Capital and the flowers I purchased in the neighborhood, I recounted my journey.

Orsted's matter, Hitogami's matter.

And, the fight in the Asura Kingdom.

"There, I also met your brother, my uncle. He looks similar to father, but his mind seemed rather weak."

I remember Philemon's face.

In some ways his face resembled Paul's.

His figure too, but their personalities differed. That was probably because he was the younger brother.

"That person also survived. Your nephew risked his own life to protect his father. Honestly, I was a bit envious of him."

Luke kept his father from being executed.

I didn't hear everything that was said, but the scene was clearly reflected in my eyes.

Philemon is not a praiseworthy man in any aspect.

I also intended to kill him at first but...

Looking at Luke's figure protecting him, for some reason I just couldn't do that.

"Then I killed a person. Although, I did not personally deliver the killing blow... He tried to kill me and I fought back. And now he is dead. I don't regret what happened, but it did leave quite a bad aftertaste."

Actually, it's not my first time killing someone.

If I think back, there is a previous case.

It's not like there was anything special this time.

But for some reason, only this time had it left a deep scar on my mind.

Surely, it was because I listened to the Water God Reida's story.

"....."

I reflect on that event.

This time, everything somehow turned out alright.

No one dying is my number one priority and I have achieved that objective.

But, at the last moment.

It was at that last moment.

If something had went even slightly wrong, someone might have died.

Even though my goal was achieved, the overall results remained, becoming a lump in my heart.

This time, I have indeed succeeded.

It was a satisfactory, total victory.

But, it seems there are still many points to reflect on too.

For example, in the preparation stage, if I got in touch with Ariel earlier.

Then maybe Hitogami would be unable to make Luke his apostle and he wouldn't disrupt us on our journey.

Well, because of that Ariel made contact with Orsted, so that was a positive result.

If I could have defeated Auber in Red Dragon's Upper Jaw.

If Orsted didn't come after the Water God activated her 『Deprivation Sword Kingdom』.

If Auber didn't carry his antidote.

Well, it's pointless to think about this now.

However, there is only one thing I can say.

Hitogami is not dead.

Although the job is over, the fight is still far from over.

Then it's still ongoing.

In the future... that fight, will probably be chaotic down to the last minute.

I was lucky this time.

... Well, I've been lucky up until now, I guess.

Until now, I wonder why I haven't failed that much.

Maybe it's because I never expected to fail.

For example, when Paul died.

I thought that it was the best outcome, given that it couldn't be helped.

Indeed, at that time and moment, I gave it my best.

There were some points where my judgement erred and I made the wrong choice.

But at that time, I did everything I could.

In the end, an ending I couldn't hope for came to pass.

Such a result could have been avoided.

It was unlucky.

It was not inevitable.

But, is it really like that?

Then, if I had good luck, Paul would have survived.

Yes, he would.

With the Hydra's last attack, Paul died.

He would probably still be alive if he was lucky.

In the event of a fluke, I wonder what would change.

In reverse, we might have gotten unlucky and someone would

become injured on the way, forcing us to retreat.

What about if the circumstances were different, if we just had one more helping hand...

When it comes down to it, luck is a flaky thing.

From now on.

Should I rely on luck to protect my family?

This time, many people could have died.

Especially, Eris who was seriously wounded at the shoulder, struck by a poisoned Kunai.

She could have stood on the brink of death, clinging to luck.

Then, in the last minute, she could succumb to death.

Can I really rely on luck?

No, one must reinforce their luck through action.

A human's abilities have limits and sometimes there is nothing that you can do about it.

But, for example, in this case.

If I had done just a little more.

If I was just a little stronger.

What would have happened if I was cornered?

How would things change?

A few changes here and there, and all of my plans could have crumbled.

What do I need more of?

I need to take charge with my own hands.

I need to become stronger.

I need to train harder.

Now, I must fight against Hitogami as Orsted's underling.

I was saved at the last minute, surviving by a thin margin.

In order to not let him kill my helpless family.

I must become someone who can properly protect them.

So, let me renew my determination once more.

"Dad, I will do my best in the future. So, please watch over me."

Saying that at the end, I left the cemetery.

Notes

1. TLC? "Well, at most, a house was undergoing repairs, though the walls were under construction", something like that?
2. the english word naive in katakana, probably meant as "sensitive"
3. An expression of gratitude before meals. Spaced out here and in katakana.

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